547

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

BELINDA.

VOL. I.

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BELINDA.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL

BY

MARIA EDGEWORTH.

547

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE SECOND EDITION,

CORRECTED AND IMPROVED.

" A prudence undeceiving, undeceived,
" That nor too little, nor too much believed;
" That scorned unjust Suspicion's coward fear,
" And without weakness knew to be sincere."

Lord LYTTELTON'S *Monody on his Wife.*

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON,

St. Paul's Churchyard,

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The following work is offered to the public as a Moral Tale—the author not wishing to acknowledge a Novel. Were all novels like those of madame de Crousaz*, Mrs. Inchbald, miss Burney, or Dr. Moore,

* Author of Caroline de Lichtfeld.

she would adopt the name of novel with delight: But so much folly, errour, and vice are disseminated in books classed under this denomination, that it is hoped the wish to assume another title will be attributed to feelings that are laudable, and not fastidious.

April 20, 1801.

CONTENTS.

VOL. I.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	*Characters*	1
II.	*Masks*	29
III.	*Lady Delacour's History*	65
IV.	*The same continued*	108
V.	*Birthday Dresses*	148
VI.	*Ways and Means*	176
VII.	*The Serpentine River*	196
VIII.	*A Family Party*	217
IX.	*Advice*	244
X.	*The mysterious Boudoir*	281
XI.	*Difficulties*	307
XII.	*The Macaw*	344

VOL. II.

XIII.	*Sortes Virgilianæ*	1
XIV.	*The Exhibition*	33
XV.	*Jealousy*	85
XVI.	*Domestic Happiness*	118

CHAP.		PAGE.
XVII.	*Rights of Woman*	151
XVIII.	*A Declaration*	175
XIX.	*A Wedding*	207
XX.	*Reconciliation*	246
XXI.	*Helena*	297
XXII.	*A Spectre*	334
XXIII.	*The Chaplain*	367

VOL. III.

XXIV.	*Peu à peu*	1
XXV.	*Love me, love my dog*	42
XXVI.	*Virginia*	89
XXVII.	*A Discovery*	154
XXVIII.	*E O.*	217
XXIX.	*A Jew*	260
XXX.	*News*	298
XXXI.	*The Dénouement*	324

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A&2-1

BELINDA.

CHAPTER I.

CHARACTERS.

MRS. Stanhope, a well-bred woman, accomplished in that branch of knowledge, which is called the art of rising in the world, had, with but a small fortune, contrived to live in the highest company. She prided herself upon having established half a dozen nieces most happily; that is to say, upon having married them to men of fortunes far superior to their own. One niece still remained unmarried—Belinda Portman, of whom she was determined

to get rid with all convenient expedition. Belinda was handsome, graceful, sprightly, and highly accomplished; her aunt had endeavoured to teach her, that a young lady's chief business is to please in society, that all her charms and accomplishments should be invariably subservient to one grand object—the establishing herself in the world.

"For this, hands, lips, and eyes were put to school,
"And each instructed feature had it's rule."

Mrs. Stanhope did not find Belinda such a docile pupil as her other nieces, for she had been educated chiefly in the country; she had early been inspired with a taste for domestic pleasures; she was fond of reading, and disposed to conduct herself with prudence and integrity. Her character, however, was yet to be developed by circumstances.

Mrs. Stanhope lived at Bath, where she had opportunities of showing her niece off, as she thought, to advantage; but as her health began to decline, she could not

go out with her as much as she wished. After manœuvering with more than her usual art, she succeeded in fastening Belinda upon the fashionable lady Delacour for the season. Her ladyship was so much pleased by miss Portman's accomplishments and vivacity, as to invite her to spend the winter with her in London. Soon after her arrival in town, Belinda received the following letter from her aunt Stanhope.

Crescent, Bath.

"After searching every place I could think of, Anne found your bracelet in your dressing table, amongst a heap of odd things, which you left behind you to be thrown away—I have sent it to you by a young gentleman, who came to Bath (unluckily) the very day you left me—Mr. Clarence Hervey—an acquaintance, and great admirer of my lady Delacour's. He is really an uncommonly pleasant young man, is highly connected, and has a fine independent fortune. Besides, he is a man of wit and

gallantry, quite a connoisseur in female grace and beauty—just the man to bring a new face into fashion—So my dear Belinda, I make it a point—look well when he is introduced to you, and remember what I have so often told you, that nobody *can* look well without taking some pains to please.

" I see—, or at least when I went out more than my health will at present permit—I used to see multitudes of silly girls, seemingly all cut out upon the same pattern, who frequented public places day after day, and year after year, without any idea further than that of diverting themselves, or of obtaining transient admiration—How I have pitied and despised the giddy creatures, whilst I have observed them playing off their unmeaning airs, vying with one another in the most *obvious*, and consequently the most ridiculous manner, so as to expose themselves before the very men they would attract; chattering, tittering, and flirting; full of the present moment, never reflecting upon the future;

quite satisfied if they got a partner at a ball, without ever thinking of a partner for life. I have often asked myself, what is to become of such girls, when they grow old or ugly, or when the public eye grows tired of them? If they have large fortunes, it is all very well; they can afford to divert themselves for a season or two without doubt; they are sure to be sought after and followed, not by mere danglers, but by men of suitable views and pretensions—But nothing to my mind can be more miserable than the situation of a poor girl, who, after spending not only the interest, but the solid capital of her small fortune in dress, and frivolous extravagance, fails in her matrimonial expectations, (as many do merely from not beginning to speculate in time). She finds herself at five or six and thirty a burden to her friends, destitute of the means of rendering herself independent (for the girls I speak of never think of *learning* to play cards), *de trop* in society, yet obliged to hang upon all her acquaintance

who wish her in Heaven, because she is unqualified to make the *expected* return for civilities, having no home, I mean no establishment, no house, &c. fit for the reception of company of a certain rank.—My dearest Belinda, may this never be your case!—You have every possible advantage, my love: no pains have been spared in your education, and (which is the essential point) I have taken care that this should be known—So that you have *the name* of being perfectly accomplished—You will also have the name of being very fashionable, if you go much into public, as doubtless you will with lady Delacour.—Your own good sense must make you aware, my dear, that from her ladyship's situation and knowledge of the world, it will always be proper, upon all subjects of conversation, for her to lead and you to follow—It would be very unfit for a young girl like you, to suffer yourself to stand in competition with lady Delacour, whose high pretensions to wit and beauty are *indisputable.* I need say no more to you upon this subject, my dear. Even with

your limited experience, you must have observed how foolish young people offend those who are the most necessary to their interests, by an imprudent indulgence of their vanity.

"Lady Delacour has an incomparable taste in dress—Consult her, my dear, and do not, by an ill-judged economy, counteract my views—Apropos—I have no objection to your being presented at court. You will, of course, have credit with all her ladyship's trades-people, if you manage properly. To know how and when to lay out money, is highly commendable, for in some situations, people judge of what one can afford by what one actually spends.—I know of no law, which compels a young lady, to tell what her age or her fortune may be—You have no occasion for caution yet on one of these points.

"I have covered my old carpet with a handsome green baize, and every stranger, who comes to see me, I observe, takes it for granted, that I have a rich carpet under it. Say every thing, that is proper,

in your best manner for me to lady Delacour.—

Adieu, my dear Belinda,

Yours very sincerely,

SELINA STANHOPE."

It is sometimes fortunate, that the means, which are taken to produce certain effects upon the mind, have a tendency directly opposite to what is expected. Mrs. Stanhope's perpetual anxiety about her niece's appearance, manners, and establishment, had completely worn out Belinda's patience; she had become more insensible to the praises of her personal charms and accomplishments, than young women of her age usually are, because she had been so much flattered and *shown off*, as it is called, by her match-making aunt.—Yet Belinda was fond of amusement, and had imbibed some of Mrs. Stanhope's prejudices in favour of rank and fashion. Her taste for literature declined in proportion

to her intercourse with the fashionable world, as she did not in this society, perceive the least use in the knowledge that she had acquired. Her mind had never been roused to much reflection; she had in general acted but as a puppet in the hands of others. To her aunt Stanhope she had hitherto paid unlimited, habitual, blind obedience; but she was more undesigning, and more free from affectation and coquetry, than could have been expected, after the course of documenting, which she had gone through. She was charmed with the idea of her visit to lady Delacour, whom she thought the most agreeable—no, that is too feeble an expression—the most fascinating person she had ever beheld. Such was the light in which her ladyship appeared, not only to Belinda, but to all the world—that is to say, all the world of fashion, and she knew of no other.—The newspapers were full of lady Delacour's parties, and lady Delacour's dresses, and lady Delacour's bon mots: every thing, that her ladyship said,

was repeated as witty; every thing, that her ladyship wore, was imitated as fashionable. Female wit sometimes depends on the beauty of it's possessor, for it's reputation; and the reign of beauty is proverbially short. Fashion often capriciously deserts her favourites, even before nature withers their charms. Lady Delacour seemed to be a fortunate exception to these general rules: long after she had lost the bloom of youth, she continued to be admired as a fashionable *bel esprit*; and long after she had ceased to be a novelty in society, her company was courted by all the gay, the witty, and the gallant. To be seen in public with lady Delacour, to be a visitor at her house, were privileges, of which numbers were vehemently ambitious; and Belinda Portman was congratulated and envied by all her acquaintance, for being admitted as an inmate. How could she avoid thinking herself singularly fortunate?

A short time after her arrival at lady Delacour's, Belinda began to see through the thin veil, with which politeness covers

domestic misery.—Abroad, and at home, lady Delacour was two different persons. Abroad she appeared all life, spirit, and good humour—at home, listless, fretful and melancholy; she seemed like a spoiled actress off the stage, over stimulated by applause, and exhausted by the exertions of supporting a fictitious character. —When her house was filled with well-dressed crowds, when it blazed with lights, and resounded with music and dancing, lady Delacour, in the character of the mistress of the revels, shone the soul and spirit of pleasure and frolic—But the moment the company retired, when the music ceased, and the lights were extinguishing, the spell was dissolved.

She would sometimes walk up and down the empty magnificent saloon, absorbed in thoughts seemingly of the most painful nature.

For some days after Belinda's arrival in town, she heard nothing of lord Delacour; his lady never mentioned his name, except once accidentally, as she was showing

miss Portman the house, she said—— "Don't open that door—those are only lord Delacour's apartments."—The first time Belinda ever saw his lordship, he was dead drunk in the arms of two footmen, who were carrying him up stairs to his bedchamber; his lady, who was just returned from Ranelagh, passed by him on the landing place with a look of sovereign contempt.

"What is the matter?—Who is this?" said Belinda.

"Only the body of my lord Delacour," said her ladyship—" his bearers have brought it up the wrong staircase—take it down again, my good friends—let his lordship go his *own way*—don't look so shocked and amazed, Belinda—don't look so *new*, child—this funeral of my lord's intellects is to me a nightly, or," added her ladyship, looking at her watch and yawning—" I believe I should say a *daily* ceremony.—Six o'clock I protest!"

The next morning, as her ladyship and miss Portman were sitting at the break-

fast table, after a very late breakfast, lord Delacour entered the room.

"Lord Delacour—sober, my dear,"—said her ladyship to miss Portman, by way of introducing him. Prejudiced by her ladyship, Belinda was inclined to think, that lord Delacour sober would not be more agreeable or more rational, than lord Delacour drunk. "How old do you take my lord to be?" whispered her ladyship, as she saw Belinda's eye fixed upon the trembling hand, which carried his tea-cup to his lips—I'll lay you a wager," continued she, aloud—"I'll lay your birth-night dress, gold fringe, and laurel wreaths into the bargain, that you don't guess right."—

"I hope you don't think of going to this birthnight, lady Delacour?" said his lordship.

"I'll give you six guesses, and I'll bet you don't come within sixteen years,"—pursued her ladyship, still looking at Belinda.

"You cannot have the new carriage you

have bespoke,"—said his lordship. "Will you do me the honour to attend to me lady Delacour."

"Then you won't venture to guess, Belinda," said her ladyship, (without honouring her lord with the smallest portion of her attention)—"Well, I believe you are right—for certainly you would guess him to be six and sixty, instead of six and thirty—but then he can drink more than any two legged animal in his majesty's dominions; and you know that is an advantage, which is well worth twenty or thirty years of a man's life—especially to persons who have no other chance of distinguishing themselves."

"If some people had distinguished themselves a little less in the world,"—retorted his lordship, "it would have been as well!"

"As well!—how flat!"—

"Flatly then I have to inform you, lady Delacour, that I will neither be contradicted, nor laughed at—You understand me.—It would be as well, flat or not flat,

my lady Delacour, if your ladyship would attend more to your own conduct, and less to others!"

"To *that* of others—his lordship means, if he means any thing—Apropos—Belinda—did not you tell me Clarence Hervey is coming to town?—You have never seen him?—Well, I'll describe him to you by negatives. He is *not* a man, who ever says any thing *flat*—He is *not* a man who must be wound up with half a dozen bottles of champaign, before he can *go*—He is *not* a man who, when he does go, goes wrong, and won't be set right—He is *not* a man, whose whole consequence, if he were married, would depend on his wife—He is *not* a man, who, if he were married, would be so desperately afraid of being governed by his wife, that he would turn gambler, jockey or sot; merely to show, that he could govern himself."—

"Go on, lady Delacour," said his lordship, who had been in vain attempting to balance a spoon on the edge of his tea-cup during the whole of this speech,

which was delivered with the most animated desire to provoke—" Go on, lady Delacour—all I desire is, that you should go on—Clarence Hervey will be much obliged to you, and I am sure so shall I—go on, my lady Delacour—go on, and you'll oblige me."

" I never will oblige you, my lord, that you may depend upon," cried her ladyship, with a look of indignant contempt.

His lordship whistled, rang for his horses, and looked at his nails with a smile. Belinda shocked, and in a great confusion rose to leave the room, dreading the gross continuance of this matrimonial dialogue.

" Mr. Hervey, my lady," said a footman, opening the door; and he was scarcely announced, when her ladyship went forward to receive him with an air of easy familiarity—" Where have you buried yourself, Hervey, this age past?" cried she, shaking hands with him—" There's absolutely no living in this most stupid of all worlds, without you, Mr. Hervey—miss Portman—but don't look as if you

were half asleep, man—What are you dreaming of Clarence?—Why looks your grace so heavily to day?"

"Oh I have passed a miserable night," replied Clarence, throwing himself into an actor's attitude, and speaking in a fine tone of stage declamation.

"What was your dream, my lord, I pray you tell me?"

said her ladyship in a similar tone—Clarence went on—

"O lord, methought what pain it was to dance!
"What dreadful noise of fiddles in my ears!
"What sights of ugly *belles* within my eyes!
———"Then came wandering by,
"A shadow like a devil, with red hair,
"Dizened with flow'rs; and she bawl'd out aloud,
"Clarence is come, false, fleeting, perjur'd Clarence!"

"O, Mrs. Luttridge to the life!" cried lady Delacour. "I know where you have been now, and I pity you—But sit down," said she, making room for him between Belinda and herself upon the sofa—"Sit

down here, and tell me what could take you to that odious Mrs. Luttridge's."

Mr. Hervey threw himself on the sofa, lord Delacour whistled as before, and left the room without uttering a syllable.

"But my dream has made me forget myself strangely," said Mr. Hervey, turning to Belinda, and producing her bracelet, "Mrs. Stanhope promised me, that if I delivered it safely, I should be rewarded by the honour of putting it on the owner's fair arm." A conversation now took place on the nature of ladies' promises—on fashionable bracelets—on the size of the arm of the Venus de Medicis—on lady Delacour's, and miss Portman's—on the thick legs of ancient statues—and on the various defects and absurdities of Mrs. Luttridge and her wig.—On all these topics Mr. Hervey displayed much wit, gallantry, and satire, with so happy an effect, that Belinda, when he took leave, was precisely of her aunt's opinion, that he was a most uncommonly pleasant young man.

Clarence Hervey might have been more

than a pleasant young man, if he had not been smitten with the desire of being thought superiour in every thing, and of being the most admired person in all companies. He had been early flattered with the idea that he was a man of genius; and he imagined, that, as such, he was entitled to be imprudent, wild, and eccentric. He affected singularity, in order to establish his claims to genius. He had considerable literary talents, by which he was distinguished at Oxford; but he was so dreadfully afraid of passing for a pedant, that when he came into the company of the idle and the ignorant, he pretended to disdain every species of knowledge. His chameleon character seemed to vary in different lights, and according to the different situations, in which he happened to be placed. He could be all things to all men—and to all women—He was supposed to be a favourite with the fair sex; and of all his various excellencies and defects, there was none, on which he valued himself so much as on his gallantry. He

was not profligate; he had a strong sense of honour, and quick feelings of humanity; but he was so easily led, or rather so easily excited by his companions, and his companions were now of such a sort, that it was probable he would soon become vicious. As to his connexion with lady Delacour, he would have started with horrour at the idea of disturbing the peace of a family; but in her family, he said there was no peace to disturb: he was vain of having it seen by the world, that he was distinguished by a lady of her wit and fashion, and he did not think it incumbent on him to be more scrupulous, or more attentive to appearance, than her ladyship. By lord Delacour's jealousy he was sometimes provoked, sometimes amused, and sometimes flattered. He was constantly of all her ladyship's parties, in public and private; consequently he saw Belinda almost every day, and every day he saw her with increasing admiration of her beauty, and with increasing dread of being *taken in*, to marry a niece of " *the*

catch-match-maker;" the name by which Mrs. Stanhope was known among the men of his acquaintance. Young ladies, who have the misfortune to be *conducted* by these artful dames, are always supposed to be partners in all the speculations, though their names may not appear in the firm of the house. If he had not been prejudiced by the character of her aunt, Mr. Hervey would have thought Belinda an undesigning, unaffected girl; but now he suspected her of artifice in every word, look and motion; and even when he felt himself most charmed by her powers of pleasing, he was most inclined to despise her for what he thought such premature proficiency in scientific coquetry. He had not sufficient resolution, to keep beyond the sphere of her attraction; but frequently, when he found himself within it, he cursed his folly, and drew back with sudden terrour. His manner towards her was so variable and inconsistent, that she knew not how to interpret it's language. Sometimes she fancied, that with

all the eloquence of eyes he said, "*I adore you*, Belinda;" at other times she imagined, that his guarded silence meant to warn her, that he was so entangled by lady Delacour, that he could not extricate himself from her snares. Whenever this last idea struck her, it excited, in the most edifying manner, her indignation against coquetry in general, and against her ladyship's in particular; she became wonderfully clear sighted to all the improprieties of her ladyship's conduct. Belinda's newly acquired moral sense was so much shocked, that she actually wrote a full statement of her observations, and her scruples, to her aunt Stanhope, concluding by a request, that she might not remain under the protection of a lady, whose character she could not approve, and whose intimacy might perhaps be injurious to her reputation, if not to her principles.

Mrs. Stanhope answered Belinda's letter in a very guarded style; she rebuked her niece severely for her imprudence in

mentioning *names* in such a manner, in a letter sent by the common post; assured her, that her reputation was in no danger; that she hoped no niece of hers would set up for a prude; a character more suspected by men of the world, than even that of a coquette; that the a person alluded to was a perfectly fit chaperon for any young lady to appear with in public, as long as she was visited by the first people in town; that as to any thing in the *private* conduct of that person, and as to any *private brouilleries* between her and her lord, Belinda should observe, on these dangerous topics, a profound silence, both in her letters, and her conversation; that as long as the lady continued under the protection of her husband, the world might whisper, but would not speak out; that as to Belinda's own principles, she would be utterly inexcusable, if, after the education she had received, they could be hurt by any bad examples; that she could not be too cautious in her management of a man of ——'s charac-

ter; that she could have no *serious* cause for jealousy in the quarter she apprehended, as marriage there could not be the object; and there was such a difference of age, that no permanent influence could probably be obtained by the lady; that the most certain method for miss Portman to expose herself to the ridicule of one of the parties, and to the total neglect of the other, would be to betray anxiety or jealousy: that, in short, if she were fool enough to lose her own heart, there would be little chance of her being wise enough to win that of ———, who was evidently a man of gallantry rather than of sentiment, and who was known to play his cards well, and to have good luck, whenever *hearts* were trumps.

Belinda's fears of lady Delacour, as a dangerous rival, were much quieted by the artful insinuations of Mrs. Stanhope, with respect to her age, &c. and in proportion as her fears subsided, she blamed herself for her having written too harshly of her ladyship's conduct. The idea that

whilst she appeared as lady Delacour's friend, she ought not to propagate any stories to her disadvantage, operated powerfully upon Belinda's mind, and she reproached herself for having told, even her aunt, what she had seen in private. She thought that she had been guilty of treachery, and she wrote again immediately to Mrs. Stanhope, to conjure her to burn her last letter, to forget, if possible, it's contents, and to believe, that not a syllable of a similar nature should ever more be heard from her: she was just concluding with the words—"I hope my dear aunt will consider all this as an errour of my judgment, and not of my heart,"—when lady Delacour burst into the room, exclaiming, in a tone of gayety—"Tragedy or comedy, Belinda? The masquerade dresses are come. But how's this?" added she, looking full in Belinda's face—"tears in the eyes! blushes in the cheeks! tremors in the joint's! and letters shuffling away! But you novice of novices, how awkwardly shuffled!—A niece of Mrs. Stanhope's, and

so unpractised a shuffler!—And it is credible she should tremble in this ridiculous way about a love-letter or two?"

"No love letters, indeed, lady Delacour," said Belinda, holding the paper fast, as her ladyship, half in play, half in earnest, attempted to snatch it from her.

"No love-letters! then it must be treason, and see it I must, by all that's good, or by all that's bad—I see the name of Delacour!"—and her ladyship absolutely seized the letters by force, in spite of all Belinda's struggles and entreaties.

"I beg, I request, I conjure you not to read it!" cried miss Portman, clasping her hands. "Read mine, read mine, if you *must*, but don't read my aunt Stanhope's.—Oh! I beg, I entreat, I conjure you!" and she threw herself upon her knees.

"You beg! you intreat! you conjure! Why, this is like the duchess de Brinvilliers, who wrote on her paper of poisons Whoever finds this, I entreat, I conjure them, in the name of more saints than

I can remember, not to open the paper any farther.—What a simpleton, to know so little of the nature of curiosity."

As she spoke, lady Delacour opened Mrs. Stanhope's letter, read it from beginning to end, folded it up coolly when she had finished it, and simply said, "the *person alluded to* is almost as bad as her name at full length: does Mrs. Stanhope think no one can make out an innuendo in a libel, or fill up a blank, but an attorney general?" pointing to a blank in Mrs. Stanhope's letter, left for the name of Clarence Hervey.

Belinda was in too much confusion, either to speak or think.

"You were right to swear they were not love-letters," pursued her ladyship, laying down the papers. "I protest I snatched them by way of frolic—I beg pardon. All I can do now is not to read the rest."

"Nay---I beg---I wish---I insist upon your reading mine," said Belinda.

When lady Delacour had read it, her countenance suddenly changed---"Worth a hundred of your aunt's, I declare," said she, patting Belinda's cheek. "What a treasure, to meet with any thing like a *new* heart---all hearts, nowadays, are second-hand at best."

Lady Delacour spoke with a tone of feeling which Belinda had never heard from her before, and which at this moment touched her so much, that she took her ladyship's hand and kissed it.

CHAPTER II.

MASKS.

"WHERE were we when all this be gan?" cried lady Delacour, forcing herself to resume an air of gayety——" O, masquerade was the order of the day—tragedy or comedy? which suits your genius best, my dear?"

"Whichever suits your ladyship's taste least."

"Why, my woman, Marriott, says, I ought to be tragedy; and, upon the notion that people always succeed best when they take characters diametrically opposite

to their own—Clarence Hervey's principle—Perhaps you don't think that he has any principles; but there you are wrong; I do assure you, he has sound principles—of taste.

"Of that," said Belinda, with a constrained smile, "he gives the most convincing proof, by his admiring your ladyship so much."

"And by his admiring miss Portman so much more. But whilst we are making speeches to one another, poor Marriott is standing in distress like Garrick, between tragedy and comedy."

Lady Delacour opened her dressing-room door, and pointed to her as she stood with the dress of the comic muse on one arm, and the tragic muse on the other.

"I am afraid I have not spirits enough to undertake the comic muse," said miss Portman.

Marriott, who was a personage of prodigious consequence, and the judge in the last resort at her mistress's toilette, looked extremely out of humour at having been

kept waiting so long; and yet more so at the idea that her appellant jurisdiction could be disputed.

"Your ladyship's taller than miss Portman by half a head," said Marriott, "and to be sure will best become tragedy, with this long train; besides, I'd settled all the rest of your ladyship's dress. Tragedy, they say, is all always tall, and, no offence, your ladyship's taller than miss Portman by half a head."

"For head read inch," said lady Delacour, "if you please."

"When things are settled, one can't bear to have them unsettled—but your ladyship must have your own way, to be sure—I'll say no more," cried she, throwing down the dresses.

"Stay, Marriott," said lady Delacour, and she placed herself between the angry waiting-maid and the door.

"Why will you, who are the best creature in the world, put yourself into these *furies* about nothing—have patience with us, and you shall be satisfied."

"That's another affair," said Marriott.

"Miss Portman," continued her ladyship, "don't talk of not having spirits—you that are all life and spirits!—What say you, Belinda?—O yes, you must be the comic muse; and I, it seems, must be tragedy, because Marriott has a passion for seeing me 'come sweeping by.' And because Marriott must have her own way in every thing—she rules me with a rod of iron, my dear—so tragedy I needs must be—*Marriott knows her power.*"

There was an air of extreme vexation in lady Delacour's countenance, as she pronounced these last words, in which evidently more was meant than met the ear. Upon many occasions miss Portman had observed, that Marriott exercised despotic authority over her mistress; and she had seen, with surprise, that a lady, who would not yield an iota of power to her husband, submitted herself to every caprice of the most insolent of waiting-women. For some time, Belinda ima-

gined that this submission was merely an air, as she had seen some other fine ladies proud of appearing to be governed by a favourite maid; but she was soon convinced that Marriott was no favourite with lady Delacour; that her ladyship's was not *proud humility*, but fear. It seemed certain, that a woman, extravagantly fond of her own *will*, would never have given it up without some very substantial reason. It seemed as if Marriott was in possession of some secret, which should for ever remain unknown. This idea had occurred to miss Portman more than once; but never so forcibly as upon the present occasion. There had always been some mystery about her ladyship's toilette; at certain hours doors were bolted, and it was impossible for any body but Marriott to obtain admission. Miss Portman at first imagined that lady Delacour dreaded the discovery of her cosmetic secrets, but her ladyship's rouge was so glaring, and her pearl powder was so obvious, that Belinda was convinced

there must be some other cause for this toilette secresy. There was a little cabinet beyond her bedchamber, which lady Delacour called her boudoir, to which there was an entrance by a back stair-case; but no one ever entered there but Marriott. One night, lady Delacour, after dancing with great spirit at a ball, at her own house, fainted suddenly; miss Portman attended her to her bedchamber, but Marriott begged that her lady might be left alone with *her*, and she would by no means suffer Belinda to follow her into the boudoir.—All these things Belinda recollected in the space of a few seconds, as she stood contemplating Marriott and the dresses. The hurry of getting ready for the masquerade, however, dispelled these thoughts, and by the time she was dressed, the idea of what Clarence Hervey would think of her appearance was uppermost in her mind. She was anxious to know, whether he would discover her in the character of the comic muse. Lady Delacour was discontented with

her tragic attire, and she grew still more out of humour with herself, when she saw Belinda.

"I protest Marriott has made a perfect fright of me," said her ladyship, as she got into her carriage, "and I'm positive my dress would become you a million of times better than your own."

Miss Portman regretted that it was too late to change.

"Not at all too late, my dear," said lady Delacour; "never too late for women to change their minds, their dress, or their lovers. Seriously, you know we are to call at my friend lady Singleton's—she sees masks to night—I'm quite intimate there; I'll make her let me step up to her own room, where no soul can interrupt us, and there we can change our dresses, and Marriott will know nothing of the matter. Marriott's a faithful creature; and very fond of me; fond of power too—but who is not?—we must all have our faults—one would not quar-

rel with such a good creature as Marriott for a trifle." Then suddenly changing her tone, she said, "not a human being will find us out at the masquerade; for no one but Mrs. Freke knows that we are two muses. Clarence Hervey swears he should know me in any disguise—but I defy him—I shall take special delight in puzzling him. Harriott Freke has told him, in confidence, that I'm to be the widow Brady, in man's clothes; now that's to be Harriott's own character, so Hervey will make fine confusion."

As soon as they got to lady Singleton's, lady Delacour and miss Portman immediately went up stairs to exchange dresses. Poor Belinda, now that she felt herself in spirits to undertake the comic muse, was rather vexed to be obliged to give up her becoming character; but there was no resisting the polite energy of lady Delacour's vanity. Her ladyship ran as quick as lightning into a closet within the bedchamber, saying to lady Single-

ton's woman, who attempted to 'follow with—" Can I do any thing for your ladyship."—"No, no, no—nothing, nothing—thank ye, thank ye,—I want no assistance—I never let any body do any thing for me but Marriott;" and she bolted herself in the closet. In a few minutes she half opened the door, threw out her tragic robes, and cried, " Here, miss Portman, give me yours—quick—and let's see whether comedy or tragedy will be ready first."

" Lord bless and forgive me," said lady Singleton's woman, when lady Delacour at last threw open the door, when she was completely dressed—" but, if your la'ship has not been dressing all this time in that den, without any thing in the shape of a looking-glass—and not to let me help! I that should have been so proud."

Lady Delacour put half a guinea into the waiting-maid's hand, laughed affectedly at her own *whimsicalities*, and de-

clared,' that she could always dress herself better without a glass than with one. All this went off admirably well with every body but miss Portman; she could not help thinking it extraordinary, that a person who was obviously fond of being waited upon, would never suffer any person to assist her at her toilette except Marriott, a woman of whom she was evidently afraid. Lady Delacour's quick eye saw curiosity painted in Belinda's countenance, and for a moment she was embarrassed; but she soon recovered herself, and endeavoured to turn the course of miss Portman's thoughts, by whispering to her some nonsense about Clarence Hervey—A cabalistical name, which she knew had the power, when pronounced in a certain tone, of throwing Belinda into confusion.

The first person they saw, when they went into the drawing-room at lady Singleton's, was this very Clarence Hervey, who was not in a domino. He had laid a

wager with one of his acquaintance, that he could perform the part of the serpent, such as he is seen in Fuseli's well known picture. For this purpose he had exerted much ingenuity in the invention and execution of a length of coiled skin, which he manœuvered with great dexterity, by means of internal wires; his grand difficulty had been to manufacture the rays that were to come from his eyes. He had contrived a set of phosphoric rays, which he was certain would charm all the fair daughters of Eve. He forgot, it seems, that phosphorus could not well be seen by candle light. When he was just equipped as a serpent, his rays set fire to part of his *envelope*, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he was extricated. He escaped unhurt, but his serpent's skin was utterly consumed; nothing remained, but the melancholy spectacle of it's skeleton. He was obliged to give up the hopes of shining at the masquerade, but he resolved to be at lady Singleton's, that he might meet lady Delacour and miss Port-

man. The moment that the tragic and comic muse appeared, he invoked them with much humour and mock pathos, declaring that he knew not which of them could best sing his adventure. After a recital of his misfortune had entertained the company, and after the muses had performed their parts to the satisfaction of the audience, and their own, the conversation ceased to be supported in masquerade character; muses and harlequins, gipsies and Cleopatras, began to talk of their private affairs, and of the news and the scandal of the day.

A groupe of gentlemen, amongst whom was Clarence Hervey, gathered round the tragic muse; as Mr. Hervey had hinted that he knew she was a person of distinction, though he would not tell her name. He thought that he could not flatter her ladyship more than by abusing miss Portman. After he had exercised his wit for some time, without obtaining from the tragic muse one single syllable, he whispered, "Lady Delacour, why this un-

natural reserve? do you imagine, that through this tragical disguise, I have not found you out?"

The tragic muse, apparently absorbed in meditation, vouchsafed no reply.

"The devil a word can you get for your pains, Hervey," said a gentleman of his acquaintance, who joined the party at this instant. "Why didn't you stick to t'other muse, who, to do her justice, is as errant a flirt as your heart could wish for."

"There's danger in flirting," said Clarence, "with an errant flirt of Mrs. Stanhope's training. There's a kind of electricity about that girl. I have a sort of cobweb feeling, an imaginary net coming all over me."

"Fore-warned is fore-armed," replied his companion—"a man must be a novice indeed, that could be taken in at this time of day by a niece of Mrs. Stanhope's.

"That Mrs. Stanhope must be a good clever dame, faith," said a third gentleman,—"There's no less than six of her nieces, whom she has *got off* within these four

winters—Not one of 'em now, that has not made a catch-match—There's the eldest of the set, Mrs. Tollemache, what had she, in the devil's name, to set up with in the world, but a pair of good eyes—Her aunt, to be sure, taught her the use of them early enough—They might have rolled to all eternity, before they would have rolled me out of my senses; but you see, they they did Tollemache's business—However they are going to part now, I hear—Tollemache was tired of her, before the honey-moon was over, as I foretold. Then there's the musical girl—Joddrell, who has no more ear than a post, went and married her, because he had a mind to set up for a connoisseur in music; and Mrs. Stanhope flattered him that he was one."

The gentlemen joined in the general laugh—The tragic muse sighed—

"Even were she at the School for Scandal, the tragic muse dare not laugh, except behind her mask," said Clarence Hervey.

" Far be it from her, to laugh at those follies which she must for ever deplore!" said Belinda, in a feigned voice—" What miseries spring from these ill-suited marriages!—The victims are sacrificed, before they have sense enough to avoid their fate."

Clarence Hervey imagined, that this speech alluded to lady Delacour's own marriage.

" Damn me, If I know any woman, young or old, that would *avoid* being married, if she could, though, damn me:" cried sir Philip Baddely, a gentleman who always supplied " each vacuity of sense" with an oath—" But damn me, Rochfort, didn't Valleton marry one of those nieces?"

" Yes: she was a mighty fine dancer, and had good legs enough: Mrs. Stanhope got poor Valleton to fight a duel about her place in a country dance, and then he was so pleased with himself for his prowess, that he married the girl."

Belinda made an effort to change her

seat, but she was encompassed so, that she could not retreat.

"As to Jenny Mason, the fifth of *the nieces*," continued the witty gentlemar, "she was as brown as mahogany, and had neither eyes, nose, mouth, nor legs: what Mrs. Stanhope could do with her I often wondered; but she took courage, *rouged* her up, set her a going as a *dasher*, and she dashed herself into Tom Levit's curricle, and Tom couldn't get her out again, till she was the honourable Mrs. Levit—She then took the reins into her own hands, and I hear, she's driving him and herself *the road to ruin*, as fast as they can gallop. As for this Belinda Portman 'twas a good hit to send her to lady Delacour's; but I take it, she hangs upon hands; for last winter, when I was at Bath, she was hawked about every where, and the aunt was puffing her with might and main. You heard of nothing, wherever you went, but of Belinda Portman, and Belinda Portman's accomplishments—Belinda Portman, and

her accomplishments, I'll swear, were as well advertised, as Packwood's razor strops."

"Mrs. Stanhope overdid the business, I think," resumed the gentleman who began the conversation—"Girls brought to the hammer this way don't go off well. It's true, Christie himself is no match for dame Stanhope—many of my acquaintance were tempted to go and look at the premises, but not one, you may be sure, had a thought of becoming a tenant for life."

"That's an honour reserved for you, Clarence Hervey," said another, tapping him upon the shoulder—"Give ye joy, Hervey,—Give ye joy!"

"Me:" said Clarence, starting.

"I'll be hanged if he didn't change colour," said his facetious companion; and all the young men again joined in a laugh.

"Laugh on, my merry men all!" cried Clarence, "but the devil's in it if I don't know my own mind better than any of

you—you don't imagine I go to lady Delacour's to look for a *wife*?—Belinda Portman's a good pretty girl, but what then? Do you think I'm an idiot—do you think I could be taken in by one of the Stanhope school? Do you think I don't see as plainly as any of you, that Belinda Portman's a composition of art and affectation?"

"Hush—not so loud, Clarence; here she comes," said his companion. "The comic muse, is not she?"—

Lady Delacour, at this moment, came lightly tripping towards them, and addressing herself, in the character of the comic muse, to Hervey, exclaimed,

"Hervey! *my* Hervey! most favoured of my votaries, why do you forsake me?

"Why mourns my friend, why weeps his down-cast eye?
"That eye where mirth and fancy used to shine.

"Though you have lost your serpent's form, your own may please any of the fair daughters of Eve."

Mr. Hervey bowed; all the gentlemen, who stood near him, smiled; the tragic muse gave an involuntary sigh.

"Could I borrow a sigh, or a tear, from my tragic sister," pursued lady Delacour, "however unbecoming to my character, I would, if only sighs or tears can win the heart of Clarence Hervey—Let me practise"—and her ladyship practised sighing with much comic effect.

"Persuasive words, and more persuasive sighs,"

said Clarence Hervey.

"A good bold Stanhope cast of the net, faith," whispered one of his companions—"Melpomene, hast thou forgot thyself to marble?" pursued lady Delacour---"I am not very well," whispered miss Portman to her ladyship---"could we get away?"

"Get away from Clarence Hervey, do you mean?" replied her ladyship, in a whisper---"'tis not easy, but we'll try what can be done, if it is necessary."—

Belinda had no power to reply to this raillery, indeed she scarcely heard the

words that were said to her; but she put her arm within lady Delacour's, who, to her great relief, had the good nature to leave the room with her immediately.—Her ladyship, though she would sacrifice the feelings of others, without compunction to her vanity, whenever the power of her wit was disputed; yet towards those by whom it was acknowledged, she showed some mercy.

"What is the matter with the child?" said she, "as she went down the staircase."

"Nothing, if I could have air," said Belinda. There was a crowd of servants in the hall.

"Why does lady Delacour avoid me so pertinaciously? What crime have I committed, that I was not favoured with one word," said Clarence Hervey, who had followed them down stairs, and overtook them in the hall.

"Do see, if you can find any of my people," cried lady Delacour.

"Lady Delacour the comic muse!" exclaimed Mr. Hervey—"I thought,"—

"No matter what you thought," interrupted her ladyship—"Let my carriage draw up, for here's a young friend of yours trembling so about *nothing*, that I am half afraid she will faint; and you know it would not be so pleasant to faint here amongst footmen—Stay! this supper room is empty—O, I did not mean to tell *you* to stay," said she to Hervey, who involuntarily followed her in the utmost consternation.

"I'm perfectly well, now—perfectly well," said Belinda.

"Perfectly a simpleton, I think," said lady Delacour—"Nay, my dear, you must be ruled, your mask must come off; didn't you tell me you wanted air—What now! This is not the first time Clarence Hervey has ever seen your face without a mask, is it? It's the first time indeed he, or any body else, ever saw it of such a colour, I believe."

When lady Delacour pulled off Belinda's mask, her face was, during the first instant,

pale; the next moment, crimsoned over with a burning blush.—

"What is the matter with ye both?—How he stands!" said lady Delacour, turning to Mr. Hervey—"Did you never see a woman blush before?—or did you never say or do any thing to make a woman blush before?—Will you give miss Portman a glass of water?—there's some behind you on that sideboard, man!—but he has neither eyes, ears, nor understanding—Do go about your business," said her ladyship, pushing him towards the door—"Do go about your business, for I have'nt common patience with you—on my conscience, I believe the man's in love—and not with me!—There's sal-volatile for you, child," continued she to Belinda. "O, you can walk now—but remember you're on slippery ground—remember Clarence Hervey is not a marrying man, and you are not a married woman."

"It is perfectly indifferent to me, madam," Belinda said, with a voice and look of proud indignation.

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"Lady Delacour, your carriage has drawn up," said Clarence Hervey, returning to the door, but without entering.

"Then put this 'perfectly well,' and perfectly indifferent' lady into it," said lady Delacour.

He obeyed without uttering a syllable.

"Dumb! Absolutely dumb: I protest," said her ladyship, as he handed her in afterward. "Why, Clarence, the casting of your serpent's skin seems to have quite changed your nature—nothing but the simplicity of the dove left; and I expect to hear you cooing presently—don't you, miss Portman?" She ordered the coachman to drive to the Pantheon.

"To the Pantheon! I was in hopes your ladyship would have the goodness to set me down at home; for indeed I shall be a burden to you, and every body else at the masquerade."

"If you have made any appointment for the rest of the evening in Berkeley square, I'll set you down certainly, if you insist upon it, my dear; for punctuality

is a virtue—but prudence is a virtue too, in a young lady; who, as your aunt Stanhope would say, has to *establish* herself in the world.—Why these tears, Belinda? —Or are they tears? for by the light of the lamps I can scarcely tell; tho' I'll swear I saw the handkerchief at the eyes —What is the meaning of all this? You'd best trust me; for I know as much of men and manners, as your aunt Stanhope at least; and in one word, you have nothing to fear from me, and every thing to hope from yourself; if you will only dry up your tears, *keep on your mask*, and take my advice; you'll find it as good as your aunt Stanhope's."

"My aunt Stanhope's! O," cried Belinda, "never, never more will I take such advice—never more will I expose myself to be insulted as a female adventurer—Little did I know in what a light I appeared—Little did I know what *gentlemen* thought of my aunt Stanhope—of my cousins—of myself."

"*Gentlemen!* I presume Clarence Her-

vey stands at this instant, in your imagination, as the representative of all the gentlemen upon earth; and he, instead of Anacharsis Cloots, is now to be sure l'orateur du genre humain—Pray let me have a specimen of the eloquence, which, to judge by it's effects, must be powerful indeed."

Miss Portman, not without some reluctance, repeated the conversation which she had heard—"And is this all?" cried lady Delacour—"Lord, my dear, you must either give up living in the world, or expect to hear yourself, and your aunts, and your cousins, and your friends, from generation to generation, abused every hour in the day, by their friends, and your friends—'tis the common course of things. Now you know what a multitude of obedient humble servants, dear creatures, and very sincere and most affectionate friends, I have, in my writing desk, and on my mantle piece, not to mention the cards which crowd the common rack from intimate acquaintance; who cannot live

without the honour, or favour, or pleasure, of seeing lady Delacour twice a week —do you think I'm fool enough to imagine that they would care the hundredth part of a straw, if I were this minute thrown into the Red, or the Black sea!—No, I have not one *real* friend in the world, except Harriot Freke—yet, you see, I am the comic muse, and mean to keep it up—keep it up to the last—on purpose to provoke those, who would give their eyes to be able to pity me—I humbly thank them, no pity for lady Delacour—Follow my example, Belinda; elbow your way through the crowd; if you stop to be civil and beg pardon, and '*hope I didn't hurt ye,*' you will be trod under foot.—Now you'll meet those young men continually, who took the liberty of laughing at your aunt, and your cousins, and yourself; they are men of fashion—Show them you've no feeling, and they'll acknowledge you for a woman of fashion—you'll marry better than any of your cousins, Clarence Hervey if you can; and then it will be your turn

to laugh about nets and cages—As to love and all that—"

The carriage stopped at the Pantheon, just as her ladyship came to the words "love and all that,"—her thoughts took a different turn, and during the remainder of the night she exhibited, in such a manner as to attract universal admiration, all the ease, and grace, and gayety of Euphrosyne.

To Belinda the night appeared long and dull; the common place wit of chimney-sweepers and gipsies; the antics of harlequins; the graces of flower-girls and Cleopatras, had not power to amuse her; for her thoughts still recurred to that conversation, which had given her so much pain —pain which lady Delacour's raillery had failed to obliterate.

"How happy you are, lady Delacour," said she, when they got into the carriage to go home—"How happy you are to have such an amazing flow of spirits!"—

"Amazing you might well say, if you knew all," said lady Delacour—and she

heaved a deep sigh, threw herself back in the carriage, let fall her mask, and was silent—It was broad day-light, and Belinda had a full view of her countenance, which was the picture of despair—She uttered not one syllable more, nor had miss Portman the courage to interrupt her meditations, till they came within sight of lady Singleton's; when Belinda ventured to remind her, that she had resolved to stop there, and change dresses before Marriott saw them.

"No, it's no matter," said lady Delacour—"Marriott will leave me at the last, like all the rest—'tis no matter."—Her ladyship sunk back into her former attitude; but after she had remained silent for some moments, she started up and exclaimed—

"If I had served myself, with half the zeal that I have served the world, I should not now be thus forsaken!—I have sacrificed reputation, happiness—every thing, to the love of frolic—All frolic will soon be at an end with me—I am dying—and

I shall die unlamented by any human being.—If I were to live my life over again, what a different life it should be!—What a different person *I would be!**—But it is all over now—I am dying."

Belinda's astonishment at these words, and at the solemn manner in which they were pronounced, was inexpressible; she gazed at lady Delacour, and then repeated the word—"dying!"—"Yes, dying," said lady Delacour.

"But you seem to me, and to all the world, in perfect health; and but half an hour ago in perfect spirits," said Belinda.

"I seem to you, and to all the world, what I am not—I tell you I am dying," said her ladyship, in an emphatic tone.

Not a word more passed, till they got home. Lady Delacour hurried up stairs, bidding Belinda follow her, to her dressing-room. Marriott was lighting the six wax candles on the dressing-table—"As I live, they have changed dresses after all,"

* This declaration was taken from the lips of a celebrated character.

said Marriott to herself, as she fixed her eyes upon lady Delacour and miss Portman. "I'll be burnt, if I don't make my lady remember this."

"Marriott, you need not wait; I'll ring when I want you," said lady Delacour, and taking one of the candles from the table, she passed on hastily with miss Portman, through her dressing-room, through her bedchamber, and to the door of the mysterious cabinet.

"Marriott, the key of this door," cried she, impatiently, after she had, in vain, attempted to open it.

"Heavenly graciousness!" cried Marriott, "is my lady out of her senses?"

"The key—the key—quick, the key," repeated lady Delacour, in a peremptory tone. She seized it as soon as Marriott drew it from her pocket, and unlocked the door.

"Had not I best put *the things* to rights, my lady?" said Marriott, catching fast hold of the opening door.

"I'll ring when you are wanted, Mar-

riott," said lady Delacour; and pushing open the door with violence, she rushed forward to the middle of the room, and turning back, she beckoned to Belinda to follow her—"Come in, what is it you are afraid of?" said she.—Belinda went on, and the moment she was in the room, lady Delacour shut and locked the door. The room was rather dark, as there was no light in it, except what came from one candle, which lady Delacour held in her hand, and which burned but dimly.—Belinda, as she looked round, saw nothing but a confusion of linen rags—vials, some empty, some full—and she perceived that there was a strong smell of medicines.

Lady Delacour, whose motions were all precipitate, like those of a person whose mind is in great agitation, looked from side to side of the room, without seeming to know what she was in search of. She then, with a species of fury, wiped the paint from her face, and returning to Belinda, held the candle so as to throw the light full upon her livid features. Her eyes

were sunk, her cheeks hollow—no trace of youth or beauty remained on her death-like countenance, which formed a horrid contrast with her gay fantastic dress.

"You are shocked, Belinda," said she, "but as yet you have seen nothing—look here,—"and baring one half of her bosom, she revealed a hideous spectacle.

Belinda sunk back into a chair—lady Delacour flung herself on her knees before her.

"Am I humbled, am I wretched enough?" cried she, her voice trembling with agony—"Yes, pity me, for what you have seen; and a thousand times more, for that which you cannot see—my mind is eaten away like my body, by incurable disease—inveterate remorse—remorse for a life of folly—of folly which has brought on me all the punishments of guilt."

"My husband," continued she, and her voice suddenly altered, from the tone of grief to that of anger—"My husband hates me—no matter—I despise him—His

relations hate me—no matter—I despise them—My own relations hate me—no matter, I never wish to see them more—never shall they see my sorrow—never shall they hear a complaint, a sigh from me. There is no torture which I could not more easily endure than their insulting pity. I will die, as I have lived, the envy and admiration of the world. When I am gone, let them find out their mistake; and moralise, if they will, over my grave."—She paused—Belinda had no power to speak.

"Promise, swear to me," resumed lady Delacour vehemently, seizing Belinda's hand, that you will never reveal to any mortal what you have seen and heard this night. No living creature suspects that lady Delacour is dying by inches, except Marriott, and that woman, whom but a few hours ago I thought my *real friend*, to whom I trusted every secret of my life, every thought of my heart.—Fool! idiot! Dupe that I was to trust to the friendship of a woman, whom I knew

to be without principle—but I thought she had honour; I thought she could never betray *me*—O Harriot! Harriot! you to desert me!—Any thing else I could have borne—but you who I thought would have supported me in the tortures of mind and body which I am to go through—you, that I thought would receive my last breath—you to desert me!—Now I am alone in the world—left to the mercy of an insolent waiting-woman."

Lady Delacour hid her face on Belinda's lap, and almost stifled by the violence of contending emotions, she at last gave vent to them, and sobbed aloud.

"Trust to one," said Belinda, pressing her hand with all the tenderness which humanity could dictate, "who will never leave you at the mercy of an insolent waiting woman—trust to me."

"Trust to you," said lady Delacour, looking up eagerly in Belinda's face; "Yes—I think—I may trust to you—for though a niece of Mrs. Stanhope's, I have seen this day, and have seen with sur-

prise, symptoms of artless feeling about you. This was what tempted me to open my mind to you, when I found that I had lost the only friend—but I will think no more of that—if you have a heart, you must feel for me—Leave me now—to-morrow you shall hear my whole history—now I am quite exhausted—ring for Marriott."—Marriott appeared with a face of constrained civility, and latent rage.—"Put me to bed, Marriott," said lady Delacour, with a subdued voice—"but first light miss Portman to her room—she need not—yet—see the horrid business of my toilette."

Belinda, when she was left alone, immediately opened her shutters, and threw up the sash to refresh herself with the morning air. She felt excessively fatigued, and in the hurry of her mind, she could not think of any thing distinctly. She took off her masquerade dress, and went to bed, in hopes of forgetting, for a few hours, what she felt indelibly impressed upon her imagination. But it

was in vain that she endeavoured to compose herself to sleep; her ideas were in too great and painful confusion. For some time, whenever she closed her eyes, the face and form of lady Delacour, such as she had just beheld them, seemed to haunt her; afterward, the idea of Clarence Hervey, and the painful recollection of the conversation she had overheard, recurred to her; the words, "do you think I don't know that Belinda Portman is a composition of artifice and affectation," were fixed in her memory. She recollected with the utmost minuteness every look of contempt, which she had seen in the faces of the young gentlemen, whilst they spoke of Mrs. Stanhope the match-maker. Belinda's mind, however, was not yet sufficiently calm to reflect: she seemed only to live over again the preceding night. At last the strange motley figures which she had seen at the masquerade flitted before her eyes, and she sunk into an uneasy slumber.

CHAPTER III.

LADY DELACOUR'S HISTORY.

MISS Portman was awakened by the ringing of lady Delacour's bedchamber bell. She opened her eyes with the confused idea that something disagreeable had happened; and before she had distinctly recollected herself, Marriott came to her bedside, with a note from lady Delacour—It was written with a pencil.

"DELACOUR—*my* lord!!!! is to have to-day what Garrick used to call a *gander feast*—will you dine with me tête-à-tête, and I'll write an *excuse*, alias a lie, to lady Singleton, in the form of a charming note

I pique myself *sur l'éloquence du billet*—then we shall have the evening to ourselves—I have much to say, as people usually have when they begin to talk of themselves.

"I have taken a double dose of opium, and am not so horridly out of spirits as I was last night—so you need not be afraid of another *scene*.

"Let me see you in my dressing-room, dear Belinda, as soon as you have adored

'With head uncover'd, the cosmetic powers.'

But you don't paint—no matter—you will—you must—every body must, sooner or later. In the mean time, whenever you want to send a note that shall not be opened by *the bearer*, put your trust neither in wafer nor wax, but twist it as I twist mine. You see I wish to put you in possession of some valuable secrets before I leave this world—this by the by, I don't, upon second thoughts, which are always best, mean to do yet.—There certainly were such people as Amazons—I hope

you admire them—for who could live without the admiration of Belinda Portman!—not Clarence Hervey assuredly—nor yet

T. C. H. DELACOUR."

Belinda obeyed the summons to her ladyship's dressing-room: she found lady Delacour with her face completely repaired with paint, and her spirits with opium. She was in high consultation with Marriott and Mrs. Franks, the milliner, about the crape petticoat of her birthnight dress, which was extended over a large hoop in full state. Mrs. Franks descanted long and learnedly upon festoons and loops, knots, and fringes, submitting all the time every thing to her ladyship's better judgment.

Marriott was sulky and silent. She opened her lips but once upon the question of laburnum, or no laburnum flowers. Against them she quoted the memoirs and authority of the celebrated Mrs. Bellamy, who has a case in point to prove,

that "straw colour must ever look like dirty white by candle light." Mrs. Franks, to compromise the matter, proposed gold laburnums, "because nothing can look better by candle light, or any light, than gold;" and lady Delacour, who was afraid that the milliner's imagination, now that it had once touched upon gold, might be led to the vulgar idea of *ready money*, suddenly broke up the conference, by exclaiming,

"We shall be late at Phillips's exhibition of French china. Mrs. Franks must let us see her again to morrow, to take into consideration your court dress, my dear Belinda—"miss Portman presented by lady Delacour"—Mrs. Franks, let her dress, for Heaven's sake, be something that will make a fine paragraph—I give you four and twenty hours to think of it.—I have done a horrid act this day," continued she, after Mrs. Franks had left the room—"absolutely written a *twisted* note to Clarence Hervey, my dear—but why did I tell you that?—Now your head

will run upon the twisted note all day, instead of upon "The life and opinions of a Lady of Quality, related by herself."

After dinner, lady Delacour, having made Belinda protest and blush, and blush and protest, that her head was not running upon the twisted note, began the history of her life and opinions in the following manner:

"I do nothing by halves, my dear—I shall not tell you my adventures, as Gil Blas told his to the archbishop of Grenada—skipping over the *useful* passages—because you are not an archbishop, and I should not have the grace to put on a sanctified face, if you were.—I am no hypocrite, and have nothing worse than folly to conceal—That's bad enough—for a woman who is known to play the fool, is always suspected of playing the devil—But I begin where I ought to end, with my moral, which I dare say you are not impatient to anticipate—I never read or listened to a moral at the end of a story in my life—manners for me, and morals for

those that like them.—My dear, you will be woefully disappointed, if in my story you expect any thing like a novel. I once heard a general say, that nothing was less like a review than a battle; and I can tell you, that nothing is more unlike a novel than real life. Of all lives, mine has been the least romantic. No love in it, but a great deal of hate. I was a rich heiress—I had, I believe, a hundred thousand pounds, or more; and twice as many caprices—I was handsome and witty—or, to speak with that kind of circumlocution which is called humility, the world, the partial world, thought me a beauty, and a bel-esprit.—Having told you my fortune, need I add, that I, or it, had lovers in abundance—of all sorts and degrees—not to reckon those, it may be presumed, who died of concealed passions for me. I had sixteen dec'arations and proposals in form—then what in the name of wonder, or of common sense, which by the by is the greatest of wonders—what in the name of common sense made me marry lord Dela-

cour?—Why, my dear, you,—no not *you*, but any girl who is not used to have a parcel of admirers, would think it the easiest thing in the world to make her choice; but let her judge by what she feels when a dexterous mercer or linen-draper produces pretty thing after pretty thing—and this is so becoming, and this will wear for ever—as he swears; but then that's so fashionable—the novice stands in a charming perplexity, and after examining, and doubting and tossing over half the goods in the shop, it's ten to one, when it begins to get late, the young lady, in a hurry, pitches upon the very ugliest and worst thing that she has seen. Just so it was with me and my lovers, and just so—

'Sad was the hour, and luckless was the day,'

I pitched upon viscount Delacour, for my lord and judge. He had just at that time lost at Newmarket more than he was worth in every sense of the word; and my fortune was the most convenient thing in the world to a man in his condition.—

Lozenges are of sovereign use in some complaints. The heiress lozenge is a specific in some consumptions. You are surprized that I can laugh and jest about such a melancholy thing as my marriage with lord Delacour; and so am I, especially when I recollect all the circumstances—for though I bragged of there being no love in my history, there was when I was a goose or a gosling of about eighteen —just your age, Belinda, I think—something very like love playing about my heart, or my head—There was a certain Henry Percival, a Clarence Hervey of a man—no, he had ten times the sense, begging your pardon, of Clarence Hervey—his misfortune, or mine, was that he had too much sense—he was in love with me but not with my faults; now I, wisely considering, that my faults were the greatest part of me, insisted upon his being in love with my faults.—He wouldn't or couldn't—I said wouldn't—he said couldn't. I had been used to see the men about me lick the dust—for it was gold dust.—Per-

cival made wry faces—Lord Delacour made none.—I pointed him out to Percival as an example—it was an example he would not follow.—I was provoked, and I married, in hopes of provoking the man I loved.—The worst of it was, I did not provoke him as much as I expected.—Six months afterward, I heard of his marriage with a very amiable woman.—I hate those *very amiable women.*—Poor Percival!—I should have been a very happy woman, I fancy, if I had married you---for I believe you were the only man who ever really loved me—but all that is over now!—Where were we?—O, I married my lord Delacour, knowing him to be a fool, and believing that, for this reason, I should find no trouble in governing him.—But what a fatal mistake!—a fool, of all animals in the creation, is the most difficult to govern.—We set out in the fashionable world, with a mutual desire to be as extravagant as possible.—Strange, that with this similarity of taste we could never agree!—

Strange, that this similarity of taste was the cause of our perpetual quarrels!—During the first year of our marriage, I had always the upper hand in these disputes, and the last word; and I was content—Stubborn as the brute was, I thought I should in time break him in.—From the specimens you have seen, you may guess that I was even then a tolerable proficient in the dear art of *self-justification*—I had almost gained my point, just broken my lord's heart, when one fair morning, I unluckily told his man Champfort, that he knew no more how to cut hair than a sheepshearer.—Champfort, who is conceit personified, took mortal offence at this; and the devil, who is always at hand to turn anger into malice, put it into Champfort's head, to put it into my lord's head, that the world thought—'*My lady governed him.*'—My lord took fire—They say the torpedo, the coldest of cold creatures, sometimes gives out a spark—I suppose, when electrified with anger.—The next time that innocent

I insisted upon my lord Delacour's doing or not doing—I forget which—the most reasonable thing in the world, my lord turns short round, and answers—'My lady Delacour, I am not a man to be governed by a wife.'—And from that time to this, the words 'I am not a man to be governed by a wife'—have been written in his obstinate face, as all the world who can read the human countenance may see.—My dear, I laugh, but even in the midst of laughter, there is sadness.—But you don't know what it is—I hope you never may—to have an obstinate fool for a bosom friend.

"I at first flattered myself, that my lord's was not an inveterate, incurable malady, but from his obvious weakness, I might have seen that there was no hope; for cases of obstinacy are always dangerous in proportion to the weakness of the patient.—My lord's case was desperate.—Kill or cure, was my humane or prudent maxim.—I determined to try the poison of jealousy, by way of an alterative.—I

had long kept it in petto as my ultimate remedy. I fixed upon a proper subject—a man with whom I thought that I could coquette to all eternity, without any danger to myself—a certain colonel Lawless—as empty a coxcomb as you would wish to see.—The world, said I to myself, can never be so absurd as to suspect lady Delacour with such a man as this, though her lord may, and will, for nothing is too absurd for him to believe.—Half my theory proved just—that is saying a great deal for any theory.—My lord swallowed the remedy that I had prepared for him, with an avidity, and a bonhommie, which it did me good to behold—my remedy operated beyond my most sanguine expectations.—The poor man was cured of his obstinacy, and became stark mad with jealousy.—Then indeed I had some hopes of him; for a madman can be managed, a fool cannot. In a month's time, I made him quite docile. With a face longer than the weeping philosopher's, he came to me one morning, and assured me, ' he

would do every thing I pleased, provided I would consult my own honour and his, and give up colonel Lawless.'

"Give up!"—I could hardly forbear laughing at the expression.—I replied, 'that as long as my lord treated me with becoming respect, I had never in thought or deed, given him just cause of complaint; but that I was not a woman to be insulted, or to be kept, as I had hitherto been, in leading-strings, by a husband.' —My lord, flattered, as I meant he should be with the idea, that it was possible he should be suspected of keeping a wife in leading-strings, fell to making protestations — 'he hoped his future conduct would prove, &c.'—Upon this hint, I gave the reins to my imagination, and full drive I went into a fresh career of extravagance; if I were checked, it was *an insult*, and I began directly to talk of *leading strings*. This ridiculous game I played successfully enough, for some time, till at length, though naturally rather slow at calculation, he actually discovered,

that if we lived at the rate of twenty thousand a year, and had only ten thousand a year to spend, we should, in due time, have nothing left. This notable discovery he communicated to me one morning, after a long preamble. When he had finished prosing, I agreed, that it was demonstrably just, that he should retrench his expenses; but that it was equally unjust and impossible, that I could make any reformation in my civil list.—That economy was a word which I had never heard of in my life, till I married his lordship: that, upon second recollection, it was true, I had heard of such a thing as national economy; and that it would be a very pretty, though rather hackneyed topic of declamation for a maiden speech in the house of lords. I therefore advised him to reserve all he had to say upon this subject for the noble lord upon the woolsack; nay, I very graciously added, that upon this condition, I would go to the house myself, to give his arguments and eloquence a fair hearing, and that I

would do my best to keep myself awake. —This was all mighty playful and witty; but it happened that my lord Delacour, who never had any great taste for wit, could not this unlucky morning at all relish it. Of course I grew angry, and reminded him, with an indelicacy which his want of generosity justified, that an heiress, who had brought a hundred thousand pounds into his family, had some right to amuse herself, and that it was not my fault if elegant amusements were more expensive than others.

"Then came a long criminating and re-criminating chapter.—It was 'My lord, your new market blunders.'—'My lady, your cursed *theatricals*'—'My lord, I have surely a right'—'and my lady, I have surely as good a right.'

"But, my dear, Belinda, however we might pay one another, we could not pay all the world with words. In short, after running through thousands, and tens of thousands, we were actually in distress for money.—Then came selling of lands,

and I don't know what devices, for raising money, according to the mode of lawyers and attorneys. It was quite indifferent to me, how they got money, provided that they got it for us.—By what art these gentlemen raised money, I never troubled myself to inquire; it might have been the black art, for any thing I know to the contrary. I know nothing of business. So I signed all the papers they brought to me; and I was mighty well pleased to find, that by so easy an expedient as writing, 'T. C. H. Delacour,' I could command money at will.—I signed, and signed, till at last I was with all due civility informed that my signature was no longer worth a farthing; and when I came to inquire into the cause of this phenomenon, I could no wise understand what my lord Delacour's lawyer said to me. He was a prig, and I had not patience either to listen to him, or to look at him. I sent for an old uncle of mine, who used to manage all my money matters before I was married: I put the uncle and the

lawyer into a room together with their parchments, to fight the matter out, or to come to a right understanding if they could.—The last it seems was quite impossible.—In the course of half an hour, out comes my uncle in such a rage! I never shall forget his face—all the bile in his body had gotten into it—he had literally no whites to his eyes. 'My dear uncle,' said I, 'What is the matter?—Why you are absolutely gold stick in waiting.'

"No matter what I am, child,' said the uncle, 'I'll tell you what you are with all your wit—a dupe—'tis a shame for a woman of your sense to be such a fool, and to know nothing of business—and if you knew nothing yourself, could not you send for me?'

"I was too ignorant to know that I knew nothing,' said I; 'but I will not trouble you with all the said Is and said hes. I was made to understand, that if lord Delacour were to die the next day, I should live a beggar.—Upon this I grew serious, as you may imagine. My uncle

assured me that I had been grossly imposed upon by my lord and his lawyer, and that I had been swindled out of my senses, and out of my dower. I repeated all that my uncle said, very faithfully, to lord Delacour; and all that either he or his lawyer could furbish out by way of answer was, that 'necessity had no law.' Necessity, it must be allowed, though it might be the mother of law, was never with my lord the mother of invention. Having now found out that I had a good right to complain, I indulged myself in it most gloriously. In short, my dear, we had a comfortable family quarrel—love quarrels are easily made up — but of money quarrels there is no end.—From the moment these money quarrels commenced, I began to hate lord Delacour—before I had only despised him.—You can have no notion to what meanness extravagance reduces men.—I have known lord Delacour shirk, and look so shabby, and tell so many lies to people about a hundred guineas—a hundred guineas! What do I

say? About twenty, ten, five!—O, my dear, I cannot bear the thoughts of it!—But I was going on to tell you that my good uncle, and all my relations, quarrelled with me for having ruined myself, as they said—but I said, they quarrelled with me for fear I should ask them for some of their 'VILE TRASH,'—Accordingly I abused and ridiculed them, one and all; and for my pains, all my acquaintance said that 'lady Delacour was a woman of a vast deal of spirit.'

"We were relieved from our money embarrassments by the timely death of a rich nobleman; to whose large estate my lord Delacour was heir at law. I was intoxicated with the idle compliments of all my acquaintance, and I endeavoured to console myself for misery at home, by gayety abroad. Ambitious of pleasing universally, I became the worst of slaves—a slave to the world.—Not a moment of my time was at my own disposal—not one of my actions; I may say, not one of my thoughts, was my own—I was obliged

to find things 'charming' every hour, which tired me to death; and every day it was the same dull round of hypocrisy and dissipation. You wonder to hear me speak in this manner, Belinda, but one must speak the truth sometimes; and this is what I have been saying to Harriot Freke continually—continually, for these ten years past. Then why persist in the same kind of life, you say?—Why, my dear, because I could not stop—I was fit for this kind of life, and for no other—I could not be happy at *home*, for what sort of a companion could I have made of lord Delacour? By this time he was tired of his horse Potatoes, and his horse High-flier, and his horse Eclipse, and Goliah, and Jenny Grey, &c. and he had taken to hard drinking, which soon turned him as you see, quite into a beast.—I forgot to tell you, that I had three children during the first five years of my marriage. The first was a boy; he was born dead; and my lord, and all his odious relations, laid the blame upon me; because I would

not be kept prisoner half a year by an old mother of his, a vile Cassandra, who was always prophesying that my child would not be born alive.—My second child was a girl, but a poor diminutive, sickly thing. —It was the fashion at this time for fine mothers to suckle their own children—so much the worse for the poor brats.—Fine nurses never made fine children. There was a prodigious rout made about the matter; a vast deal of sentiment and sympathy, and compliments and inquiries; but after the novelty was over, I became heartily sick of the business; and at the end of about three months my poor child was sick too—I don't much like to think of it—it died.—If I had put it out to nurse, I should have been thought by my friends an unnatural mother—but I should have saved it's life. I should have bewailed the loss of the infant more, if lord Delacour's relations and my own had not made such lamentations upon the occasion, that I was stunned.—I couldn't or wouldn't shed a tear, and I left it to the

old dowager to perform in public, as she wished, the part of chief mourner, and to comfort herself in private, by lifting up her hands and eyes, and railing at me as the most insensible of mothers. All this time I suffered more than she did; but that is what she shall never have the satisfaction of knowing. I determined, that if ever I had another child I would not have the barbarity to nurse it myself. Accordingly, when my third child, a girl, was born, I sent it off immediately to the country, to a stout healthy, broad-faced nurse, under whose care it grew and flourished; so that at three years old, when it was brought back to me, I could scarcely believe the chubby little thing was my own child. The same reasons which convinced me I ought not to nurse my own child, determined me, *à plus forte raison*, not to undertake it's education. Lord Delacour could not bear the child because it was not a boy. The girl was put under the care of a governess, who plagued my heart out with her airs and tracasseries for

three or four years; at the end of which time, as she turned out to be lord Delacour's mistress in form, I was obliged—in form—to beg she would leave my house, and I put her pupil into better hands, I hope, at a celebrated academy for young ladies. There she will, at any rate, be better instructed than she could be at home.—I beg your pardon, my dear, for this digression on nursing and schooling, but I wanted only to explain to you why it was, that when I was weary of the business, I still went on in a course of dissipation. You see I had nothing at home, either in the shape of husband or children, to engage my affections. I believe it was this 'aching void' in my heart which made me, after looking abroad some time for a bosom friend, take such a prodigious fancy to Mrs. Freke. She was just then coming into fashion—she struck me the first time I met her, as being downright ugly; but there was a wild oddity in her countenance which made one stare at her, and she was delighted to

be stared at —especially by me—so we were mutually agreeable to each other—I as starer, and she as staree. Harriot Freke had, without comparison, more assurance than any man or woman I ever saw. She was downright brass—but of the finest kind—Corinthian brass—She was one of the first who brought what I call *harum scarum* manners into fashion. I told you that she had assurance—*impudence* I should have called it, for no other word is strong enough.—Such things as I have heard Harriot Freke say!—You will not believe it; but her conversation at first absolutely made me, like an old fashioned fool, wish I had a fan to play with. But to my astonishment, all this *took* surprisingly with a set of fashionable young men. I found it necessary to reform my manners. If I had not taken heart of grace, and publicly abjured the heresies of *false delicacy*, I should have been excommunicated—Lady Delacour's sprightly elegance—allow me to speak of myself in the style in which the newspaper writers

talk of me—Lady Delacour's sprightly elegance was but pale—not to say *faded* pink, compared with the scarlet of Mrs. Freke's dashing audacity. As my rival, she would on certain ground have beaten me hollow; it was therefore good policy to make her my friend. We joined forces, and nothing could ſtand againſt us. But I have no right to give myself credit for good policy in forming this intimacy; I really followed the dictates of my heart or my imagination. There was a frankness in Harriot's manner, which I mistook for artlessness of character. She spoke with such unbounded freedom on certain subjects, that I gave her credit for unbounded sincerity on all subjects. She had the talent of making the world believe *that* virtue to be invulnerable by nature, which disdained the common outworks of art for it's defence. I, amongst others, took it for granted, that the woman who could make it her sport to 'touch the brink of all we hate,' must have a stronger head than other people.—I have since been

convinced, however, of my mistake.—I am persuaded that few can touch the brink without tumbling headlong down the precipice—Don't apply this, my dear, *literally*, to the person of whom we were speaking. I am not base enough to betray her secrets, however I may have been provoked by her treachery. Of her character and history you shall hear nothing, but what is necessary for my own justification. The league of amity between us was scarcely ratified, before my lord Delacour came with his wise remonstrating face, to beg me 'to consider what was due to my own honour and his.'—Like the cosmogony-man in the Vicar of Wakefield, he came out over and over with this cant phrase, which had once stood him in stead.—'Do you think my lord,' said I, 'that because I give up poor Lawless to oblige you, I shall give up all common sense, to suit myself to your taste?—Harriot Freke is visited by every body, but old dowagers and old maids.—I am neither an old dowager nor an old maid—The consequence is obvious, my lord.'—Pertness

in dialogue, my dear, often succeeds better with my lord than wit.—I therefore saved the sterling gold, and bestowed upon him nothing but counters—I tell you this to save the credit of my taste and judgment.—But to return to my friendship for Harriot Freke. I, of course, repeated to her every word which had passed between my husband and me. She out-Heroded Herod upon the occasion; and laughed so much at what she called my folly in *pleading guilty* in the Lawless cause, that I was downright ashamed of myself, and purely to prove my innocence, I determined, upon the first convenient opportunity, to renew my intimacy with the colonel. The opportunity which I so ardently desired of redeeming my independence, was not long wanting—Lawless, as my stars (which you know are always more in fault than ourselves) would have it, returned just at this time from the continent, where he had been with his regiment; he returned with a wound across his forehead, and a black fillet

which made him look something more like a hero, and ten times more like a coxcomb, than ever.—He was in fashion at all events, and amongst other ladies, Mrs. Luttridge—odious Mrs. Luttridge! smiled upon him.—The colonel, however, had taste enough to know the difference between smile and smile; he laid himself and his laurels at my feet, and I carried him and them about in triumph. Wherever I went, especially to Mrs. Luttridge's, envy and scandal joined hands to attack me, and I heard wondering and whispering wherever I went. I had no object in view but to provoke my husband, therefore conscious of the purity of my intentions, it was my delight to brave the opinion of the wondering world. I gave myself no concern about the effect my coquetry might have upon the object of this flirtation—poor Lawless!—heart—I took it for granted he had none.—How should a coxcomb come by a heart—vanity I knew he had in abundance, but this gave me no alarm, as I thought that if it should

ever make him forget himself—I mean, forget what was due to me—I could, by one flash of my wit, strike him to the earth, or blast him for ever. One night we had been together at Mrs. Luttridge's, —she, amongst other good things, kept a faro bank—and I am convinced, cheated —Be that as it may, I lost an immensity of money, and it was my pride to lose with as much gayety as any body else could win; so I was, or appeared to be, in uncommonly high spirits, and Lawless had his share of my good humour. We left Mrs. Luttridge's together early; about half past one. As the colonel was going to hand me to my carriage, a smart-looking young man, as I thought, came up close to the coach door, and stared me full in the face: I was not a woman to be disconcerted at such a thing as this, but I really was startled when the young fellow jumped into the carriage after me: I thought he was mad: I had only courage enough to scream.—Lawless seized hold of the

intruder to drag him out, and out he dragged the youth, exclaiming in a high tone—' What is the meaning of all this, sir?—Who the devil are you?—My name's Lawless:—who the devil are you?' The answer to this was a convulsion of laughter. By the laugh, I knew it to be Harriot Freke.—' Who am I! only a Freke!' cried she—' shake hands.' I gave her my hand, into the carriage she sprang, and desired the colonel to follow her: Lawless laughed, we all laughed, and drove away. ' Where do you think I've been?' said Harriot, ' in the gallery of the House of Commons; almost squeezed to death these four hours; but I swore I'd hear Sheridan's speech to night, and I did—Betted fifty guineas I would, with Mrs. Luttridge, and have won.—Fun and Freke for ever, huzza!' Harriot was mad with spirits, and so noisy and unmanageable that, as I told her, I was sure she was drunk.—Lawless, in his silly way, laughed incessantly, and I was so taken up with her

oddities, that, for some time, I did not perceive we were going the Lord knows where; till, at last, when the 'larum of Harriot's voice ceased for an instant, I was struck with the strange sound of the carriage. Where are we? Not upon the stones, I'm sure;' said I; and putting my head out of the window, I saw we were beyond the turnpike.—' The coachman's drunk as well as you, Harriot,' said I; and I was going to pull the string to stop him, but Harriot had hold of it.—' The man is going very right,' said she, ' I've told him where to go.—Now don't fancy that Lawless and I are going to run away with you.—All that is unnecessary now-a-days, thank God!'—To this I agreed, and laughed for fear of being ridiculous.—' Guess where you are going,' said Harriot.—I guessed and guessed, but could not guess right; and my merry companions were infinitely diverted with my perplexity and impatience, more especially, as I believe, in spite of all my efforts, I grew rather graver than

than usual. We went on to the end of Sloane-street, and quite out of town; at last we stopped.—It was dark, the footman's flambeau was out, I could only just see by the lamps, that we were at the door of a lone, odd looking house.—The house door opened, and an old woman appeared with a lanthorn in her hand.

"Where is this farce or freak, or whatever you call it, to end?' said I, as Harriot pulled me into the dark passage along with her.

"Alas! my dear Belinda," said lady Delacour, pausing; "I little foresaw where or how it was to end: but I am not come yet to the tragical part of my story, and as long as I can laugh, I will.—As the old woman and her miserable blue light went on before us, I could almost have thought of sir Bertrand, or of some German *horrifications*, but I heard Lawless, who never could help laughing at the wrong time, bursting behind me, with a sense of his own superiority.

"Now you will learn your destiny,

lady Delacour?" said Harriott, in a solemn tone.

"'Yes! from the celebrated Mrs. W—, the modern dealer in art magic,' said I, laughing, 'for now I guess whereabouts I am.—Colonel Lawless's laugh broke the spell—Harriot Freke, never whilst you live expect to succeed in *the sublime.*— Harriot swore at the colonel, for the veriest *spoil-sport* she had ever seen, and she whispered to me—'the reason he laughs is, because he is afraid of our suspecting the truth of him, that he believes *tout de bon* in conjuration, and the devil, and all that.'— The old woman, whose cue I found was to be dumb, opened a door at the top of a narrow staircase, and pointing to a tall figure, completely enveloped in fur, left us to our fate. I will not trouble you with a pompous description of all the mummery of the scene, my dear, as I despair of being able to frighten you out of your wits. I should have been downright angry with Harriot Freke for bringing me to such a place, but that

I knew women of the first fashion had been with Mrs. W—— before us—some in sober sadness—some by way of frolic. —So as there was no fear of being ridiculous, there was no shame, you know, and my conscience was quite at ease. Harriot had no conscience, so she was always at ease; and never more so than in male attire, which she had been told became her particularly. She supported the character of a young rake with such spirit and *truth*, that I am sure no common conjurer could have discovered any thing feminine about her. She rattled on with a set of nonsensical questions; and among other things, she asked, 'How soon will lady Delacour marry again after her lord's death?'

"She will never marry after her lord's death,' answered the oracle.—'Then she will marry during his life time,' said Harriot.—'True,' answered the oracle. —Colonel Lawless laughed; I was angry; and the colonel would have been quiet, for he was a gentleman, but there

was no such thing as managing Mrs. Freke, who, though she had laid aside the modesty of her own sex, had not acquired the decency of the other.—'Who is to be lady Delacour's second husband?' cried she. 'You'll not offend any of the present company by naming the man.'—'Her second husband I cannot name,' replied the oracle, 'but let her beware of a Lawless lover.' Mrs. Freke and colonel Lawless, encouraged by her, triumphed over me without mercy; I may say, without shame!—Well, my dear, I am in a hurry to have done with all this: though I '*doated upon folly*,' yet I was terrified at the thoughts of any thing worse. The idea of a divorce, the public brand of shameful life, shocked me, in spite of all my real and all my assumed levity. O that I had, at this instant, dared to *be myself!* But my fear of ridicule was greater than my fear of vice.—'Bless me, my dear lady Delacour,' whispered Harriot, as we left this house, 'what can make you in such a

desperate hurry to get home?—You gape and fidget—one would think you had never sat up a night before in your life.—I verily believe you are afraid to trust yourself with us.—Which of us are you afraid of; Lawless, or me, or *yourself?*' —There was a tone of contempt in the last words, which piqued me to the quick; and, however strange it may seem, I was now anxious only to convince Harriot that I was not afraid of myself—False shame made me act, as if I had no shame. —You would not suspect me of knowing any thing of false shame, but depend upon it, my dear, many, who appear to have as much assurance as I have, are secretly it's slaves.—I moralize, because I am come to a part of my story, which I should almost be glad to omit—but I promised you, that there should be no sins of omission. It was light, but not broad daylight, when we got to Knightsbridge. Lawless encouraged, for I cannot deny it, by the levity of my manner, as well as of Harriot's, was in higher and more familiar spirits than I ever saw him.—Mrs. Freke

desired me to set her down at her sister's who lived in Grosvenor Place.—I did so, and I beg you to believe, that I was in an agony to get rid of my colonel at the same time; but you know, I could not, before Harriot Freke, absolutely say to him—'Get out!'—Indeed, to tell things as they were, it was scarcely possible to guess by my manner, that I was under any anxiety—I acted my part so well, or so ill.—As Harriot Freke jumped out of the coach, a cock crowed in the area of her sister's house. 'There!' cried Harriot, 'do you hear the cock crow, lady Delacour?'—'Now it's to be hoped your fear of goblins is over—else I would not be so cruel, as to leave the pretty dear all alone'—'All alone,' answered I—'your friend the colonel is much obliged to you for making nobody of him.'—'My friend the colonel,' whispered Harriot, leaning with her bold masculine arms folded upon the coach door—'My friend the colonel is much obliged to me, I'm sure, for remembering

what the cunning, or the knowing woman told us just now, that you and he are—or are to be—one and the same person. So when I said I left you alone, I was not guilty of a bull, was I?'—I had the grace to be heartily ashamed of this speech, and called out in utter confusion—'to Berkeley Square.—But where shall I set you down, colonel? — Harriot, good morning—don't forget you are in man's clothes.'—I did not dare to repeat the question of 'where shall I set you down, colonel?' at this instrnt, because Harriot gave me such an arch sneering look, as much as to say—still afraid of yourself!—We drove on—I'm persuaded that the confusion which, in spite of all my efforts, broke through my affected levity, encouraged Lawless, who was naturally a coxcomb and a fool, to believe that I was actually his — else he never could have been so insolent.—In short, my dear, before we had got through the turnpike gate, I was downright obliged to say to him—'Get out!'—which I did with a degree

of indignation, that quite astonished him. —He muttered something about ladies knowing their minds—and I own, though I went off with flying colours, I secretly blamed myself as much as I did him, and I blamed Harriot more than I did either. —I sent for her the next day as soon as I could, to consult her. She expressed such astonishment, and so much concern, at this catastrophe of our night's frolic, and blamed herself with so many oaths, and execrated Lawless for a coxcomb so much to the ease and satisfaction of my conscience, that I was confirmed in my good opinion of her, and indeed felt for her the most lively affection and esteem—for observe, with me esteem ever followed affection, instead of affection following esteem.—Woe be to all, who in morals preposterously put the cart before the horse!—But to proceed with my history—all fashionable historians stop to make reflections, supposing that no one else can have the sense to make any. My *esteemed* friend agreed with me, that it would be

best for all the parties concerned to hush up this business; that as Lawless was going out of town in a few days, to be elected for a borough, we should get rid of him in the best way possible, without 'more last words'—that he had been punished sufficiently on the spot, and that to punish twice for the same offence, once in private and once in public, would be contrary to the laws of English men and English women, and in my case would be contrary to the evident dictates of prudence — because I could not complain, without calling up lord Delacour, to call Lawless out—This I could not do without acknowledging that his lordship had been in the right, in warning me about *his honour and my own*, which old phrase I dreaded to hear for the ninety-ninth time; besides, lord Delacour was the last man in the world I should have chosen for my knight—though unluckily he was my lord —Besides, all things considered, I thought the whole story might not tell so well in the world for me, tell it which way I would

—We therefore agreed, that it would be most expedient to hold our tongues. We took it for granted, that Lawless would hold his, and as for my people, they knew nothing, I thought, or if they did, I was sure of them. How the thing got abroad, I could not at the time conceive, though now I am well acquainted with the baseness and treachery of the woman I called my friend.—The affair was known, and talked of every where the next day, and the story was told especially at odious Mrs. Luttridge's, with such exaggerations as drove me almost mad.—I was enraged, inconceivably enraged with Lawless, from whom I imagined the reports originated.

"I was venting my indignation against him in a room full of company, where I had just made my story good, when a gentleman, to whom I was a stranger, came in breathless, with the news that colonel Lawless was killed in a duel by lord Delacour—that they were carrying

him home to his mother's, and that the body was just going by the door.—The company all crowded to the windows immediately, and I was left standing alone, till I could stand no longer.—What was said or done after this, I do not remember—I only know, that when I came to myself, the most dreadful sensation I ever experienced was, the certainty that I had the blood of a fellow creature to answer for—I wonder," said lady Delacour, breaking off at this part of her history, and rising suddenly,—"I wonder what is become of Marriott?—surely it is time for me to have my drops.—Miss Portman, have the goodness to ring, for I *must* have something immediately."—Belinda was terrified at the wildness of her manner.—Lady Delacour became more composed, or put more constraint upon herself, at the sight of Marriott—Marriott brought from the closet in her lady's room the drops, which lady Delacour swallowed with precipitation.—Then she ordered

coffee, and afterward chasse-café, and at last, turning to Belinda with a forced smile, she said—

"Now shall the princess Scheherazade go on with her story?"

CHAPTER IV.

LADY DELACOUR'S HISTORY CONTINUED.

"I LEFT off with the true skill of a good storyteller, at the most interesting part—a duel—and yet, duels are so common now, that they are really vulgar incidents.

"But we think that a duel concerning ourselves must be more extraordinary than any other. We hear of men being shot in duels about nothing every day, so it is really a weakness in me to think so much about poor Lawless's death, as Harriot Freke said to me at the time.—She expected to see me show sorrow in *publick*—but very fortunately for me, she roused my pride—which was always

stronger than my reason; and I behaved myself upon the occasion as became a fine lady.—There were some things, however, I could hardly stand. — You must know that Lawless, fool and coxcomb as he was, had some magnanimity, and showed it—as some people do from whom it is least expected—on his deathbed. The last words he said, were—' lady Delacour is innocent—I charge you don't prosecute lord Delacour.'—This he said to his mother—who—to complete my misery—is one of the most respectable women in England, and was most desperately fond of Lawless, who was an only son.—She never has recovered his loss. — Do you remember asking me who a tall elderly lady in mourning was, that you saw getting into her carriage one day, in South Audley street chapel, as we passed by in our way to the park? — That was lady Lawless—I believe I didn't answer you at the time.—I meet her every now and then—to me a spectre of dismay.—But as Harriot Freke said, certainly such a

man as poor Lawless was a useless being in society, however he may be regretted by a doating mother.—We should see things in a philosophical light if we can.—I should not have suffered half as much as I did, if he had been a man of a stronger understanding; but he was a poor, vain, weak creature, that I actually drew on and duped with my own coquetry, whilst all the time I was endeavouring only to plague lord Delacour.—I was punished enough by the airs his lordship doubly gave himself, upon the strength of his valour and his judgment—they roused me completely—and I blamed him with all my might, and got an enormous party of my friends, I mean my acquaintance, to run him down full cry, for having fought for me—It was absurd—It was rash—It was want of proper confidence in his wife; *thus we* said:—lord Delacour had his partizans, it is true, amongst whom the loudest was odious Mrs. Luttridge. I embraced the first opportunity I met with of retaliation.—You

must know that Mrs. Luttridge, beside being a great faro-player, was a great dabbler in politics; for she was almost as fond of power as of money: she talked loud and fluently, and had, somehow or other, partly by intriguing, partly by relationship, connected herself with some of the leading men in parliament. — There was to be a contested election in our county; Mr. Luttridge had a good estate there next to lord Delacour's, and being of an ancient family, and keeping a good table, the Luttridges were popular enough. —At the first news of an election, out comes a flaming advertisement from Mr. Luttridge; away posted Mrs. Luttridge to begin her canvas, and away posted lady Delacour after her, to canvas for a cousin of Harriot Freke's.—This was a new scene for me; but I piqued myself on the versatility of my talents, and I laid myself out to please all the squires, and, what was more difficult, all the squires' ladies in *****shire. I was ambitious to have it said of me, 'that I was the finest

figure that ever appeared upon canvass! —O ye *****shireians, how hard did I work to obtain your praise!—All that the combined force of vanity and hatred could inspire, I performed, and with success. You have but little curiosity, I presume, to know how many hogsheads of port went down the throat of John Bull, or how many hecatombs were offered up to the genius of English liberty. My hatred to Mrs. Luttridge was, of course, called love of my country. Lady Delacour was deified by all *true* patriots—and, luckily, a handsome legacy left me for my spirit, by an uncle who died six weeks before the election, enabled us to sustain the expense of my apotheosis—The day of election came — Harriot Freke and I made our appearance on the hustings, dressed in splendid party uniforms; and before us, our knights and squires held two enormous panniers full of ribands and cockades; which we distributed with a grace that won all hearts, if not all votes. —Mrs. Luttridge thought the panniers

would carry the election; and forthwith she sent off an express for a pair of panniers twice as large as ours. I took out my pencil, and drew a caricature of *the ass and her panniers*; wrote an epigram at the bottom of it; and the epigram and the caricature were soon in the hands of half *****shire. The verses were as bad as impromptus usually are, and the drawing was not much better than the writing, but the *good will* of the critics supplied all my deficiencies; and never was more praise bestowed upon the pen of Burke, or the pencil of Reynolds, than was lavished upon me by my honest friends.—My dear Belinda, if you will not quarrel with the quality, you may have what quantity of praise you please. —Mrs. Luttridge, as I hoped and expected, was beyond measure enraged at the sight of the caricature and epigram. —She was, beside being a gamester and a politician—what do you think?—an excellent shot!—She wished, she said, to be a man, that she might be qualified to

take proper notice of my conduct.—The same kind friends who showed her my epigram, repeated to me her observation upon it. Harriot Freke was at my elbow, and offered to take any *message* I might think proper to Mrs. Luttridge. I scarcely thought her in earnest, till she added, that the only way left, nowadays, for a woman to distinguish herself, was by spirit; as every thing else was grown 'cheap and vulgar in the eyes of men.'—That she knew one of the cleverest young men in England, and a man of fashion into the bargain, who was just going to publish a treatise 'upon the Propriety and Necessity of Female Duelling;' and that he had demonstrated beyond a possibility of doubt, that civilized society could not exist half a century longer without this necessary improvement. I had prodigious deference for the masculine superiority, as I thought it, of Harriot's understanding. She was a philosopher, and a fine lady—I was only a fine lady—I had never fired a pistol in my life; and I was

a little inclined to cowardice; but Harriot offered to bet any wager upon the steadiness of my hand, and assured me that I should charm all beholders in male attire—In short, as my second, if I would furnish her with proper credentials, she swore she would undertake to furnish me with clothes, and pistols, and courage, and every thing I wanted.—I sat down to pen my challenge. When I was writing it, my hand did not tremble *much*—not more than my lord Delacour's always does. The challenge was very prettily worded—I believe I can repeat it.

'Lady Delacour presents her compliments to Mrs. Luttridge—she is informed that Mrs. L—— wishes she were a man, that she might be qualified to take *proper* notice of lady D——'s conduct. Lady Delacour begs leave to assure Mrs. Luttridge, that though she has the misfortune to be a woman, she is willing to account for her conduct, in any manner Mrs. L—— may think proper—and at any hour and place she may appoint.

Lady D—— leaves the choice of the weapons to Mrs. L——. Mrs. H. Freke, who has the honour of presenting this note, is lady Delacour's *friend* upon this occasion.'

"I cannot repeat Mrs. Luttridge's answer; all I know is, it was not half as neatly worded as my note; but the essential part of it was, that she accepted my challenge *with pleasure*, and should do herself the honour of meeting me at six o'clock the next morning—that miss Honour O'Grady would be her *friend* upon the occasion—and that pistols were the weapons she preferred. The place of appointment was behind an old barn, about two miles from the town of ****. The hour was fixed to be early in the morning, to prevent all probability of interruption. In the evening, Harriot and I rode to the ground. There were several bullets sticking in the posts of the barn:—this was the place where Mrs. Luttridge had been accustomed to exercise herself in firing at a mark. I own

my courage 'oozed out' a little at this sight.—The duke de Rochefoucault, I believe, said truly, that 'many would be cowards if they dared.' There seemed to me to be no physical, and less moral necessity for my fighting this duel, but I did not venture to reason on a point of honour with my spirited second. I bravadoed to Harriot most magnanimously, but at night, when Marriott was undressing me, I could not forbear giving her a hint, which I thought might tend to preserve the king's peace, and the peace of the county. I went to the ground in the morning, in good spirits and with a safe conscience. Harriot was in admiration of my 'lion-port:' to do her justice, she conducted herself with great coolness upon the occasion; but then it may be observed, that it was I who was to stand fire, and not she. I thought of poor Lawless a billion of times at least, as we were going to the ground; and I had my presentiments, and my confused notions of poetic justice—but poetic justice,

and all other sorts of justice, went clear out of my head, when I saw my antagonist and her friend actually pistol in hand, waiting for us: they were both in men's clothes.—I secretly called upon the name of Marriott with fervency, and I looked round with more anxiety than ever Bluebeard's wife, or 'Anne, sister Anne!' looked to see if any body was coming: nothing was to be seen, but the grass blown by the wind —No Marriott to throw herself *toute éplorée* between the combatants—no peace-officers to bind us over to our good behaviour—no deliverance at hand—and Mrs. Luttridge, by all the laws of honour, as challenged, was to have the first shot—O, those laws of honour!—I was upon the point of making an apology, in spite of them all, when, to my inexpressible joy, I was relieved from the dreadful alternative of being shot through the head, or of becoming a laughing-stock for life, by an incident, less heroic, I'll grant ye, than opportune.—But you

shall have the whole scene, as well as I can recollect it—*as well*—for those who, for the first time, go to a field of battle, do not, as I am crebibly informed, and internally persuaded, always find the clearness of their memories improved by the novelty of their situation. Mrs. Luttridge, when we came up, was leaning, with a truly martial negligence, against the wall of the barn, with her pistol, as I told you, in her hand. She spoke not a word, but her second, miss Honour O'Grady, advanced towards us immediately, and taking off her hat very manfully, addressed herself to my second.—'Mistriss Harriot Freke, I presume, if I mistake not.'—Harriot bowed slightly, and answered—'Miss Honour O'Grady, I presume, if I mistake not.'—'The same, at your service,' replied miss Honour.—'I have a few words to suggest, that may save a great deal of noise, and bloodshed, and ill will.'—'As to noise,' said Harriot, 'it is a thing in which I delight, therefore, I beg that mayn't be spared on my

account; as to bloodshed, I beg that may not be spared on lady Delacour's account, for her honour, I am sure, is dearer to her than her blood; and as to ill will, I should be concerned to have that saved on Mrs. Luttridge's account, as we all know it is the thing in which she delights, even more than I do in noise, or lady Delacour in blood:—but pray proceed, miss Honour O'Grady; you have a few words to suggest.'—'Yes, I would willingly observe, as it is my duty to my *principal*,' said Honour, 'that one, who is compelled to fire a pistol with her left hand, though ever so good a shot *naturally*, is by no means on a footing with one who has the advantage of her right hand.' Harriot rubbed my pistol with the sleeve of her coat, and I, recovering my wit with my hopes of being witty with impunity, answered —'Unquestionably!—left-handed wisdom and left-handed courage are neither of them the very best of their kinds, but we must content ourselves with them, *if* we can have

no other. 'That *if*,' cried Honour O'Grady, 'is not, like most of the family of the *ifs*, a peace-maker. My lady Delacour, I was going to observe, that my principal has met with an unfortunate accident in the shape of a whitlow on the fore-finger of her right hand, which incapacitates her from drawing a trigger; but I am at your service, ladies, either of you, that can't put up with a disappointment with good humour.'—I never, during the whole course of my existence, was more disposed to bear a disappointment with good humour, to prove that I was incapable of bearing malice; and, to oblige the seconds, for form sake, I agreed that we should take our ground, and fire our pistols into the air—Mrs. Luttridge, with her left-handed wisdom, fired first—and I, with great magnanimity, followed her example.—I must do my adversary's second, miss Honour O'Grady, the justice to observe, that in this whole affair she conducted herself not only with the spirit, but with the good nature and generosity

characteristic of her nation—We met enemies and parted friends.

"Life is a tragicomedy!—Though the critics will allow of no such thing in their books, it is a true representation of what passes in the world; and of all lives, mine has been the most grotesque mixture, or alternation, I should say, of tragedy and comedy.—All this is a-propos to something I have not told you yet.—This comic duel ended tragically for me—'How?'—you say—Why, 'tis clear that I was not shot through the head; but it would have been better, a hundred times better for me, if I had; I should have been spared, in this life at least, the torments of the damned—I was not used to priming and loading—my pistol was overcharged—when I fired, it recoiled, and I received a blow on my breast, the consequences of which you have seen—or are to see.

"The pain was nothing at the moment compared with what I have since experienced—But I will not complain till I cannot avoid it—I had not, at the time I

received the blow, much leisure for lamentation; for I had scarcely discharged my pistol, when we heard a loud shout on the other side of the barn, and a crowd of town's people, country people, and hay makers, came pouring down the lane towards us with rakes and pitch forks in their hands.—An English mob is really a formidable thing.—Marriott had mismanaged her business most strangely—she had, indeed, spread a report of a duel—a female duel—but the untutored sense of propriety amongst these rusticks was so shocked at the idea of a duel fought by women in *men's clothes*, that I verily believe they would have thrown us into the river with all their hearts—Stupid blockheads! I am convinced that they would not have been half so much scandalized if we had boxed in petticoats—The want of these petticoats had nearly proved our destruction, or at least our disgrace—a peeress, after being ducked, could never have held her head above water again with any grace.—The mob had just closed

round us, crying, 'shame! shame! shame! —duck 'em, duck 'em—gentle or simple —duck 'em—duck 'em'—when their attention was suddenly turned towards a person, who was driving up the lane a large herd of squeaking, grunting pigs.—The person was clad in splendid regimentals, and he was armed with a long pole, to the end of which hung a bladder, and his pigs were frightened, and they ran squeaking from one side of the road to the other; and the pig-driver in regimentals, in the midst of the noise, could not without difficulty make his voice heard; but at last he was understood to say, that a bet of a hundred guineas depended upon his being able to keep these pigs ahead of a flock of turkies that were following them, and he begged the mob to give him and his pigs fair play.—At the news of this wager, and at the sight of the gentleman turned pig-driver, the mob were in raptures, and, at the sound of his voice, Harriot Freke immediately exclaimed—'Clarence Hervey!—By all that's lucky!'

"Clarence Hervey!" interrupted Be-

linda.—" Clarence Hervey, my dear," said lady Delacour, coolly—" he can do every thing you know! even drive pigs better than any body else"—but let me go on.

" Harriot Freke shouted in a Stentorean voice, which actually made your pig-driver start: she explained to him in French our distress, and the cause of it. Clarence was, as I suppose you have discovered long ago, ' that cleverest young man in England, who had written on the propriety and necessity of female duelling.'—He answered Harriot in French—' To attempt your rescue by force would be vain—but I will do better, I will make a diversion in your favour.'—Immediately our hero, addressing himself to the sturdy fellow who held me in custody, exclaimed—' Huzza, my boys! Old England for ever! Yonder comes a Frenchman with a flock of turkies. My pigs will beat them for a hundred guineas.—Old England for ever, huzza!'

" As he spoke, the French officer, with

whom Clarence Hervey had laid the wager, appeared at the turn of the lane—his turkies half flying—half hobbling up the road before him.—The Frenchman waved a red streamer over the heads of his flock—Clarence shook a pole, from the top of which hung a bladder full of beans. The pigs grunted—the turkies gobbled, and the mob shouted—eager for the fame of Old England, the crowd followed Clarence with loud acclamations. — The French officer was followed with groans and hisses.—So great was the confusion, and so great the zeal of the patriots, that even the pleasure of ducking the female duellists was forgotten in the general enthusiasm.—All eyes and all hearts were intent upon the race—and now the turkies got foremost—and now the pigs. — But when we came within sight of the horse-pond, I heard one man cry—'don't forget the ducking.'—How I trembled! but our knight shouted to his followers—'For the love of old England, my brave boys, keep between my pigs and the pond—if our pigs

see the water they'll run to it, and England's undone.'

"The whole fury of the mob was by this speech conducted away from us.—'On, on, my boys, into town, to the market-place; whoever gains the market-place first, wins the day.'—Our general shook the rattling bladder in triumph, over the heads of 'the swinish multitude,' as we followed in perfect security in his train into the town.

"Men, women, and children, crowded to the windows and doors.—'Retreat into the first place you can,' whispered Clarence to us; we were close to him.—Harriot Freke pushed her way into a milliner's shop—I could not get in after her, for a frightened pig turned back suddenly, and almost threw me down. Clarence Hervey caught me, and favoured my retreat into the shop. But poor Clarence lost his bet by his gallantry. Whilst he was manœuvering in my favour, the turkies got several yards ahead of the pigs,

and reaching the market-place first, won the race.

"The French officer found great difficulty in getting safe out of the town; but Clarence represented to the mob, that he was a prisoner on his parole, and that it would be unlike Englishmen, to insult a prisoner.—So he got off without being pelted, and they both returned in safety to the house of general Y——, where they were to dine, and where they entertained a large party of officers with the account of this adventure.

"Mrs. Freke and I rejoiced in our escape, and we thought that the whole business was now over—but in this we were mistaken. The news of our duel, which had spread in the town, raised such an uproar as had never been heard, even at the noisiest election.—Would you believe it? The fate of the election turned upon this duel.—The common people, one and all, declared, that they would not vote either for Mr. Luttridge or Mr. Freke, because *as how*—But I need not

repeat all the *platitudes* that they said.—In short, neither ribands nor brandy could bring them to reason. With true English pig-headedness, they went every man of them and polled for an independent candidate of their own choosing, whose wife, forsooth, was a proper behaved woman.

"The only thing I had to console me for all this, was Clarence Hervey's opinion, that I looked better in man's clothes, than my friend Harriot Freke. — Clarence was charmed with my spirit and grace; but he had not leisure at that time to attach himself seriously to me, or to any thing. — He was then, I guess, about nineteen or twenty; he was all vivacity, presumption, and paradox; he was enthusiastic in support of his opinions, but he was at the same time the most candid man in the world; for there was no set of tenets which could be called exclusively his; he adopted in liberal rotation every possible absurdity, and to do him justice, defended each in it's turn with the most ingenious arguments that could be

devised, and with a flow of words which charmed the ear if not the sense.—His essay on female duelling was a most extraordinary performance; it was handed about in manuscript till it was worn out, he talked of publishing it, and dedicating it to me. However, this scheme, amongst a million of others, he *talked of*, but never put into execution.—Luckily for him, many of his follies evaporated in words.—I saw but little either of him or his follies at this time.—All I know about him is, that after he had lost his bet of a hundred guineas, as a pig-driver, by his knight-errantry in rescuing the female duellists from a mob, he wrote a very charming copy of verses upon the occasion; and that he was so much provoked by the stupidity of some of his brother officers, who could not understand the verses, that he took a disgust to the army, and sold his commission. He set out upon a tour to the continent, and I returned with Harriot Freke to London, and forgot the existence of such a person as Clarence Hervey

for three or four years.—Unless people can be of some use, or unless they are actually present, let them be ever so agreeable or meritorious, we are very apt to forget them.—One grows strangely selfish by living in the world.—'Tis a perfect cure for romantic notions of gratitude, and love, and so forth.—If I had lived in the country, in an old manor house, Clarence Hervey would have doubtless reigned paramount in my imagination, as the deliverer of my life, &c. But in London one has no time for thinking of deliverers. And yet what I did with my time I cannot tell you—'Tis gone, and no trace left—One day after another went, I know not how—Had I wept for every day I lost, I'm sure I should have cried my eyes out before this time.—If I had enjoyed any amusement in the midst of this dissipation, it would all have been very well; but I delare to you in confidence, I have been tired to death.—Nothing can be more monotonous than the life of a hacknied fine lady.

—I question whether a drayhorse, or a horse in a mill, would willingly exchange places with one — if they could know as much of the matter as I do. — You are surprised at hearing all this from me.—My dear Belinda, how I envy you! — You are not yet tired of every thing. — *The world* has still the gloss of novelty for you—But don't expect that can last above a season. —My first winter was certainly entertaining enough. — One begins with being charmed with the bustle and glare, and what the French call *spectacle;* this is over, I think, in six months. — I can but just recollect having been amused at the Theatres, and the Opera, and the Pantheon, and Ranelagh, and all those places, for their own sakes. — Soon, very soon we go out to see people, not things. — Then we grow tired of seeing people — then we grow tired of being seen by people— and then we go out, merely because we can't stay at home. — A dismal story, and a true one. — Excuse me for showing you the simple truth; well dressed falsehood is a personage much more *presentable.*—

I am now come to an epoch in my history, in which there is a dearth of extraordinary events—What shall I do?—Shall I invent—I would if I could—but I cannot—Then I must confess to you, that during these last four years I should have died of ennui if I had not been kept alive by my hatred of Mrs. Luttridge, and of my husband—I don't know which I hate most—O, yes I do—I certainly hate Mrs. Luttridge the most—for a woman can always hate a woman more than she can hate a man, unless she has been in love with him—which I never was with poor lord Delacour. — Yes! I certainly hate Mrs. Luttridge the most—I cannot count the number of extravagant things I have done on purpose to eclipse her.—We have had rival routs, rival concerts, rival galas, rival theatres — she has cost me more than *she's* worth — But then I certainly have mortified her once a month at least.—My hatred to Mrs. Luttridge, my dear, is the remote cause of my love for you—for it was the cause of my intimacy

with your aunt Stanhope —— Mrs. Stanhope is really a clever woman, she knows how to turn the hatred of all her friends and acquaintance to her own advantage. —To serve lovers, is a thankless office, compared with that of serving *haters*—polite haters I mean.—It may be dangerous, for aught I know, to interpose in the quarrels of those who hate their neighbours, not only with all their souls, but with all their strength — the barbarians fight it out, kiss, and are friends.—The quarrels which never come to blows are safer for a go-between; but even these are not to be compared to such as never come to words—Your true silent hatred is that which lasts for ever. The moment it was known that Mrs. Luttridge and I had come to the resolution never to speak to one another, your aunt Stanhope began to minister to my hatred so, that she made hereself quite agreeable. She, one winter, gave me notice that my adversary had set her heart upon having a magnificent entertainment, on a particular day. On

that day, I determined, of course, to have a rival gala.—Mrs. Stanhope's maid had a lover, a gardener, who lived at Chelsea; and the gardener had an aloe, which was expected soon to blow. Now, a plant that blows but once in a hundred years is worth having. The gardener intended to make a public exhibition of it; by which he expected to gain about a hundred guineas. — Your aunt Stanhope's maid got it from him, for me, for fifty; and I had it whispered about, that an aloe in full blow, would stand in the middle of one of lady Delacour's supper tables.—The difficulty was to make Mrs. Luttridge fix upon the very day we wanted; for you know we could not possibly put off the blowing of our aloe.—Your aunt Stanhope managed the thing admirably, by means of a *common friend*, who was not a suspected person with the Luttridges—in short, my dear, I gained my point—every body came from Mrs. Luttridge's to me, or to my aloe.—She had a prodigiously fine supper, but scarcely a soul staid with

her; they all came to see, what could be seen but once in a hundred years.—Now, the aloe, you know, is of a cumbersome height for a supper ornament. — My saloon luckily has a dome, and under the dome we placed it. — Round the huge china vase in which it was planted, we placed the most beautiful, or rather the most expensive, hot house plants we could procure.—After all, the aloe was an ugly thing—but it answered my purpose—it made Mrs. Luttridge, as I am credibly informed, absolutely weep with vexation.— I was excessively obliged to your aunt Stanhope, and I assured her, that if ever it were in my power, she might depend upon my gratitude. — Pray, when you write, repeat the same thing to her, and tell her, that since she has introduced Belinda Portman to me, I am a hundred times more obliged to her than ever I was before.—But to proceed with my important history.—I will not tire you, with fighting over again all my battles, in my seven years war with Mrs. Luttridge.—I believe

love is more to your taste than hatred; therefore I will go on as faſt as possible, to Clarence Hervey's return from his travels. —He was much improved by them; or at least I thought so, for he was heard to declare, that after all he had seen in France and Italy, lady Delacour appeared to him the most charming woman *of her age*, in Europe.—The words, *of her age*, piqued me, and I spared no pains to make him forget them—a stupid man cannot readily be persuaded out of his senses—what he sees, he sees, and neither more nor less—but 'tis the easiest thing in the world to catch hold of a man of genius—you have nothing to do but to appeal from his senses to his imagination; and then he sees with the eyes of his imagination, and hears with the ears of his imagination; and then no matter what the age, beauty, or wit of the charmer may be—no matter whether it be lady Delacour, or Belinda Portman—I think I know Clarence Hervey's character *au fin fond*, and I could lead him where I pleased—but don't be

alarmed, my dear, you know I can't lead him into matrimony.—You look at me, and from me—and you don't well know which way to look—You are surprised perhaps, after all that passed, all that I felt, and all that I still feel about poor Lawless, I should not be cured of coquetry—So am I surprised—but habit, fashion, the devil, I believe, leads us on—and then, lord Delacour is so obstinate and jealous—you can't have forgotten the *polite conversation* that passed one morning at breakfast between his lordship and me, about Clarence Hervey—but neither does his lordship know, nor does Clarence Hervey suspect, that my object with him is to conceal from the world, what I cannot conceal from myself, that I am a dying woman.—I am, and I see you think me, a strange, weak, inconsistent creature—I was intended for something better—but now it is too late—a coquet I have lived, and a coquet I shall die—I speak frankly to you—let me have the glory of leading Clarence Hervey about with me in public for a few

months longer, then I must quit the stage. —As to love, you know with me, that is out of the qustion; all I ask or wish for is admiration."

Lady Delacour paused, and leaned back on the sofa — she appeared in great pain.

"O! — I am, sometimes," resumed she, "as you see, in terrible pain. — For two years after I gave myself that blow with the pistol, I neglected the warning twinges that I felt from time to time — at last I was terrified. — Marriott was the only person to whom I mentioned my fears, and she was profoundly ignorant.—She flattered me with false hopes, till, alas! it was in vain to doubt of the nature of my complaint.—Then she urged me to consult a physician—that I would not do—I could not—I never will consult a physician—I would not for the universe have my situation known.—You stare—you cannot enter into my feelings.—Why, my dear, if I lose admiration, what have I left?—Would you have me live upon

pity?—Consider, what a dreadful thing it must be to me, who have no friends, no family, to be confined to a sick room—a sick bed—'tis what I must come to at last—but not yet—not yet—I have fortitude—I should despise myself if I had no species of merit—besides, it is still some occupation to me, to act my part in public—and bustle, noise, nonsense, if they do not amuse, or interest me, yet they stifle reflection—may you never know what it is to feel remorse!—The idea of that poor wretch, Lawless, whom I actually murdered, as much as if I had shot him, haunts me whenever I am alone—it is now between eight and nine years since he died, and I have lived ever since in a constant course of dissipation—but it won't do—Conscience! conscience will be heard.—Since my health has been weakened, I believe I have acquired more conscience—I really think that my stupid lord, who has neither ideas nor sensations, except when he is intoxicated, is a hundred times happier than I am.—

But I will spare you, Belinda—I promised that you should not have a *scene*, and I will keep my word — It is, however, a great relief to open my mind to one who has some feeling—Harriot Freke has none —I am convinced that she has no more feeling than this table. — I have not yet told you how she has used me.—You know that it was she who led, or rather dragged me, into that scrape with Lawless —For that I never reproached her.—You know it was she who frightened me into fighting that duel with Mrs. Luttridge—For this I never reproached her—She has cost me my peace of mind—my health—my life—She knows it, and she forsakes, betrays, insults, and leaves me to die—I cannot command my temper sufficiently to be coherent when I speak of her—I cannot express in words what I feel — How could that most treacherous of beings, for ten years, make me believe that she was my friend? — Whilst I thought she really loved me, I pardoned her all her faults—*All*—what a comprehensive word!

—All, all I forgave, and continually said —*but* she has a good heart—A good heart! —She has no heart! She has no feeling for any living creature but herself—I always thought that she cared for no one but for me—but now I find she can throw me off as easily as she would her glove—And this too I suppose she calls a frolic—or, in her own vulgar language, fun.—Can you believe it?—What do you think she has done, my dear? She has gone over at last to odious Mrs. Luttridge—actually she is gone down with the Luttridges to ——shire.—The independent member has taken the Chiltern Hundreds, vacates his seat—a new election comes on directly—the Luttridges are to bring in Freke—not Harriot's cousin, they have cut him—but her husband, who is now to commence senator—he is to come in for the county, upon condition that Luttridge shall have Freke's borough.—Lord Delacour, without saying one syllable, has gone and promised his interest to this precious junto, and lady Delacour is left

a miserable cipher — My lord's motives I can clearly understand; he lost a thousand guineas to Mrs. Luttridge this winter, and this is a convenient way of paying her—why Harriot should be so anxious to serve a husband whom she hates — bitterly hates—might surprise any body who did not know *les dessous des cartes* as well as I do.—You are but just come into the world, Belinda — the world of wickedness I mean, my dear, or you would have heard what a piece of work there was, a few years ago, about Harriot Freke, and this cousin of hers. — Without betraying her confidence, I may just tell you what is known to every body, that she went so far, that if it had not been for me, not a soul would have visited her — she swam in the sea of folly out of her depth—the tide of fashion ebbed, and then was she left sticking knee deep in the mud; a ridiculous, scandalous figure; I had the courage and foolish good nature to hazard myself for her, and actually dragged her to terra firma—how she has gone on since I

cannot tell you—precisely, because I am in the secret—but the catastrophe is public—to make her peace with her husband, she gives up her friend.—Well! that I could have pardoned, if she had not been so base as to go over to Mrs. Luttridge.—Mrs. Luttridge offered (I've seen the letter and Harriot's answer) to bring in Freke, the husband, and to make both a county and *a family peace*, on condition that Harriot should give up all connexion with lady Delacour.—Mrs. Luttridge knew this would provoke me beyond measure, and there is nothing she would not do to gratify her mean, malevolent passions—she has succeeded for once in her life—the blame of the duel, of course, is all thrown upon me—and, would you believe it, Harriot Freke, I am credibly informed, throws all the blame of Lawless's business on me—nay, hints that Lawless's death-bed declaration of my innocence was *very generous*.—O, the treachery, the baseness of this woman!—and it was my fate to hear all this last night, at the mas-

querade—I waited, and waited, and looked every where for Harriot—she was to be the widow Brady, I knew—At last the widow Brady made her appearance, and I accosted her with all my usual familiarity—The widow was dumb—I insisted upon knowing the cause of this sudden loss of speech—The widow took me into another apartment, unmasked, and there I beheld Mr. Freke, the husband.—I was astonished, had no idea of the truth—' Where is Harriot?' I believe were the first words I said—' Gone to the country.'—' To the country!'—' Yes; to ——shire, with Mrs. Luttridge.'—Mrs. Luttridge, odious Mrs. Luttridge! I could scarcely believe my senses—but Freke, who always hated me, believing that I led his wife, instead of her leading me into mischief, would have enjoyed my astonishment and my rage—so I concealed both, with all possible presence of mind.—He went on overwhelming me with explanations and copies of letters; and declared it was at

Mrs. Freke's request he did and said all this; and that he was to follow her early the next morning to ——shire.—I broke from him, simply wishing him a good journey, and as much family peace as his patience merited. — He knows that I know his wife's history, and though *she* has no ſhame, he has some.—I had the satisfaction to leave him blushing with anger, and I supported the character of the comic muse a full hour afterward, to convince him, that all their combined malice would fail to break my spirit—in public—what I suffer in private, is known only to my own heart."

As ſhe finiſhed these words, lady Delacour rose abruptly, and hummed a new opera air. Then she retired to her boudoir, saying, with an air of levity, to Belinda, as ſhe left the room—

"Good bye, my dear Belinda; I leave you to ruminate sweet and bitter thoughts—to think of the last speech and confession of lady Delacour, or,

what will interest you much more, the first speech and confession of—Clarence Hervey."

CHAPTER V.

BIRTHDAY DRESSES.

LADY Delacour's history, and the manner in which it was related, excited in Belinda's mind astonishment—pity—admiration—and contempt.—Astonishment at her inconsistency—pity for her misfortunes — admiration of her talents — and contempt for her conduct.—To these emotions succeeded the recollection of the promise which she had made, not to leave her in her last illness, at the mercy of an insolent attendant. This promise Belinda thought of with terrour—she dreaded the sight of sufferings, which she knew must end in death—she dreaded the sight

of that affected gaiety, and of that real levity, which so ill became the condition of a dying woman.—She trembled at the idea of being under the guidance of one, who was so little able to conduct herself; and she could not help blaming her aunt Stanhope severely, for placing her in such a perilous situation. It was obvious that some of lady Delacour's history must have been known to Mrs. Stanhope; and Belinda, the more she reflected, the more she was surprised at her aunt's having chosen such a chaperon for a young woman just entering into the world. When the understanding is suddenly roused and forced to exert itself, what a multitude of deductions it makes in a short time.—Belinda saw things in a new light; and for the first time in her life she reasoned for herself upon what she saw and felt.—It is sometimes safer for young people to see, than to hear of certain characters.—At a distance, lady Delacour had appeared to miss Portman the happiest person in the world; upon a nearer view, she dis-

covered that her ladyſhip was one of the most miserable of human beings.—To have married her niece to such a man as lord Delacour, Mrs. Stanhope would have thought the most fortunate thing imaginable; but it was now obvious to Belinda, that neither the title of viscountes, nor the pleasure of spending three fortunes, could ensure felicity. Lady Delacour confessed, that in the midst of the utmost luxury and dissipation, she had been a constant prey to ennui; that the want of domestic happiness could never be supplied by that public admiration, of which she was so ambitious; and that the immoderate indulgence of her vanity had led her, by inevitable steps, into follies and imprudence, which had ruined her health, and destroyed her peace of mind.—"If lady Delacour, with all the advantages of wealth, rank, wit and beauty, has not been able to make herself happy in this life of fashionable dissipation," said Belinda to herself, "why should I follow the same course, and expect to be more fortunate?"

It is singular that the very means, which Mrs. Stanhope had taken to make a fine lady of her niece, tended to produce an effect diametrically opposite to what might have been expected.—The result of Belinda's reflections upon lady Delacour's history was a resolution to profit by her bad example; but this resolution it was more easy to form than to keep.—Her ladyship, where she wished to please or to govern, had fascinating manners, and could alternately use the sarcastic powers of wit, and the fond tone of persuasion, to accomplish her purposes.—It was Belinda's intention, in pursuance of her new plans of life, to spend, whilst ſhe remained in London, as little money as possible upon superfluities and dress.—She had, at her own disposal, only 100l. per annum, the interest of her fortune; but beside this, her aunt, who was desirous that she should go to court, and make a splendid figure there, had sent her a draught on her banker for two hundred

guineas. "You will, I trust," said her aunt, at the conclusion of her letter, "repay me when you are established in the world, as I hope and believe, from what I hear from lady Delacour of the power of your charms, you will soon be, to the entire satisfaction of all your friends. —Pray do not neglect to mention my friend Clarence Hervey particularly, when you write next.—I understand from one who is well acquainted with him, and who has actually seen his rent-roll, that he has a clear 10,000l. a year.

Belinda resolved neither to go to court, nor to touch her aunt's two hundred guineas; and she wrote a long letter to her, in which she explained her feelings and views at large. In this letter she meant to have returned Mrs. Stanhope's draught, but her feelings and views changed between the writing of this epistle, and the going out of the post.—Mrs. Franks, the milliner, came in the interim, and brought home lady Delacour's beautiful dress; it

was not the sight of this, however, which changed Belinda's mind; but she could not resist lady Delacour's raillery.

"Why, my dear," said her ladyship, after having listened to all miss Portman could say about her love of independence, and the necessity of economy to preserve that independence—"all this is prodigiously fine—but shall I translate it into plain English—You were mortally wounded the other night by some random reflections of a set of foolish young men—Clarence Hervey amongst the number—and instead of punishing them, you sagely and generously determined to punish yourself. Then, to convince this youth that you have not a thought of those odious nets and cages, that you have no design whatever upon his heart, and that he has no manner of influence on yours; you very judiciously determine, at the first hint from him, to change your dress, your manners, and your character; and thus to say to him, in as plain terms as possible—

"You see, sir, a word to the wise is enough —I understand you disapprove of showy dress, and coquetry, and therefore, as I dressed and coquetted only to please you, now I shall lay aside dress and coquetry, since I find that they are not to your taste —and I hope, sir, you like my simplicity !' —Depend upon it, my dear, Clarence Hervey understands simplicity as well as you or I do.—All this would be vastly well, if he did not know that you overheard that conversation; but as he does know it, trust me he will attribute any sudden change in your manners and appearance, right or wrong, to the motives I have mentioned.—So don't, novice as you are! set about to manœuvre for yourself. Leave all that to your aunt Stanhope, or to me, and then you know your conscience will be all the time as white as—your hands—which, by the by, Clarence Hervey, the other day, said were the whitest hands he had ever seen.—Perhaps all this time you have taken it into

your head, that full dress will not become you; but I assure you that it will—you look well in any thing——

> 'But from the hoop's bewitching round,
> 'The very shoe has power to wound.'

So come down to Mrs. Franks, and order your birthnight dress like a reasonable creature."

Like a reasonable creature, miss Portman followed lady Delacour, and bespoke, or rather let her ladyship bespeak for her, fifty guinea's worth of elegance and fashion.—"You must go to the drawing-room with me next week, and be presented," said lady Delacour, "and then, as it is the first time, you must be elegantly dressed—and you must not wear the same dress on the birthnight.—So Mrs. Franks let this be finished first, as fast as you can, and by that time perhaps, we shall think of something superlatively charming for the night of nights."

Mrs. Franks departed, and Belinda sighed.——"A silver penny for your

thoughts!" cried lady Delacour—" You are thinking that you are like Camilla, and I like Mrs. Mitten—novel reading, as I dare say you have been told by your governess, as I was told by mine, and she by hers, I suppose—novel reading for young ladies is the most dangerous—

" O, Clarence Hervey, I protest!" cried lady Delacour, as he at this instant entered the room.—" Do, pray Clarence, help me out, for the sake of this young lady with a moral sentence against novel reading: but that might go against your conscience—or your interest, so we'll spare you.—How I regret that we had not the charming serpent at the masquerade the other night!"

The moment her ladyship mentioned the masquerade, the conversation which had passed at lady Singleton's, came full into Clarence Hervey's recollection, and his embarrassment was evident—not indeed to Belinda, who had turned away to look over some new music that lay upon a stand at the farthest end of the room,

and she found this such a wonderfully interesting occupation, that she did not for some minutes hear, or appear to hear, one word of the conversation which was going on between Mr. Hervey and lady Delacour.—At last her ladyship tapped her upon the shoulder, saying in a playful tone—"miss Portman, I arrest your attention at the suit of Clarence Hervey—this gentleman is passionately fond of music—to my curse—for he never sees my harp, but he worries me with reproaches for having left off playing upon it.—Now he has just given me his word, that he will not reproach me again for a month to come, if you will favour us with one air.—I assure you Clarence, that Belinda touches a harp divinely—she would absolutely charm."—"Your ladyship should not waste such valuable praise," interrupted Belinda.—"Do you forget, that Belinda Portman and her accomplishments have already been as well advertised as Packwood's razor strops?"

The manner in which these words were

pronounced, made a great impression upon Clarence Hervey, and he began to believe it was possible, that a niece of the match-making Mrs. Stanhope might not be "a compound of art and affectation"—"Though her aunt has advertised her," said he to himself, "she seems to have too much dignity to advertise herself, and it would be very unjust to blame her for the faults of another person.—I will see more of her,"

Some morning visitors were announced, who for the time suspended Clarence Hervey's reflexions; the effect of them, however, immediately appeared, for as his good opinion of Belinda increased, his ambition to please her was strongly excited.—He displayed all his powers of wit and humour; and not only lady Delacour, but every body present observed, "that Mr. Hervey, who was always the most entertaining man in the world, this morning surpassed himself, and was absolutely the most entertaining man in the universe." He was mortified notwish-

standing, for he distinctly perceived, that whilst Belinda joined with ease and dignity in the general conversation, her manner towards him was grave and reserved.—The next morning he called earlier than usual, but though lady Delacour was always at home to him, she was then unluckily dressing to go to court; he inquired whether miss Portman would accompany her ladyship, and he learnt from his friend Marriott, that she was not to be presented this day, because Mrs. Franks had not brought home her dress.—Mr. Hervey called again two hours afterwards —lady Delacour was gone to court—He asked for miss Portman—" Not at home" —was the mortifying answer, though as he had passed by the windows, he had heard the delightful sound of her harp.—He walked up and down in the square impatiently, till he saw lady Delacour's carriage appear.

" The drawing-room has lasted an unconscionable time this morning," said he, as he handed her ladyship out of her

coach.—"Am not I the most virtuous of virtuous women," said lady Delacour, "to go to court such a day as this?"—But whispered she, as she went up stairs, "like all other amazingly good people, I have amazingly good reasons for being good.—The queen is soon to give a charming breakfast at Frogmore, and I am paying my court with all my might, in hopes of being asked, for Belinda must see one of their galas before we leave town, *that* I'm determined upon.—But where is she?"—"Not at home," said Clarence, smiling.—"O, not at home is nonsense, you know.—Shine out, appear, be found, my lovely Zara!" cried lady Delacour, opening the library door.—"Here she is—what doing I know not—studying Hervey's Meditations on the Tombs I should guess, by the sanctification of her looks—If you be not totally above all sublunary considerations, admire my lilies of the valley—and let me give you a lecture, not upon heads—or upon hearts—but on what is of much

more consequence, upon hoops.—Every body wears hoops, but how few—'tis a melancholy consideration!—how very few can manage them.—There's my friend lady C—— in an elegant undress; she passes for very genteel, but put her into a hoop and she looks as pitiable a figure—as much a prisoner—and as little able to walk as a child in a go-cart.—She gets on, I grant you, and so does the poor child, but getting on you know is not walking. —O, Clarence, I wish you had seen the two lady R's sticking close to one another; their father pushing them on together, like two decanters in a bottle-coaster—with such magnificent diamond labels round their necks!"

Encouraged by Clarence Hervey's laughter, lady Delacour went on to mimic what she called the hoop awkwardnesses of all her acquaintance, and if these could have failed to divert Belinda, it was impossible for her to be serious, when she heard Clarence Hervey declare, that he was convinced he could manage a hoop as

well as any woman in England, except lady Delacour.

"Now here," said he, "is the purblind dowager lady Boucher, just at the door, lady Delacour; she wou'd not know my face, she wou'd not see my beard, and I will bet fifty guineas, that I come into a room in a hoop, and that she does not find me out by my air—that I do not betray myself, in short, by my masculine awkwardness."

"I hold you to your word, Clarence," cried lady Delacour.—"They have let the purblind dowager in, I hear her on the stairs.—Here—through this way you can go—as you do every thing quicker than any body else in the world, you will certainly be full dressed in a quarter of an hour, I'll engage to keep the dowager in scandal for that time.—Go!—Marriott has old hoops and old finery of mine, and you have all powerful influence, I know, with Marriott—So go and use it, and let us see you in all your glory—though I vow I tremble for my fifty guineas."

Lady Delacour kept the dowager in scandal, according to her engagement, for a good quarter of an hour; then the dresses at the drawing-room took up another quarter; and, at last, the dowager began to give an account of sundry wonderful cures that had been performed to her certain knowledge, by her favourite concentrated extract or anima of quassia. —She entered into the history of the Negro slave named Quassi, who discovered this medical wood, which he kept a close secret till Mr. Daghlberg, a magistrate of Surinam, wormed it out of him, brought a branch of the tree to Europe, and communicated it to the great Linnæus — when Clarence Hervey was announced, by the title of—" The countess de Pomenars."

" An émigrée—a charming woman!"—whispered lady Delacour—" she was to have been at the drawing-room to day, but for a blunder of mine; ready dressed she was, and I didn't call for her!—Ah, madame de Pomenars, I am actually ashamed to

see you," continued her ladyship, and she went forward to meet Clarence Hervey, who really made his entrée with very composed assurance and grace—He managed his hoop with such skill and dexterity, that he well deserved the praise of being a universal genius. The countess de Pomenars spoke French, and broken English incomparably well; and she made out that she was descended from the Pomenars of the time of madame de Sevigné: she said that she had in her possession several original letters of madame de Sevigné's, and a lock of madame de Grignan's fine hair.

"I have sometimes fancied—but I believe it is only my fancy," said lady Delacour, "that this young lady," turning to Belinda, "is not unlike your madame de Grignan—I have seen a picture of her at Strawberry-hill."

Madame de Pomenars acknowledged that there was a resemblance—but added, that it was flattery in the extreme to madame de Grignan to say so.

"It would be a sin, undoubtedly, to waste flattery upon the dead, my dear countess," said lady Delacour.—"But here, without flattery to the living, as you have a lock of madame de Grignan's hair, you can tell us whether *la belle chevelure*, of which madame de Sevigné talked so much, was any thing to be compared to my Belinda's."—As she spoke, lady Delacour, before Belinda was aware of her intentions, dextrously let down her beautiful tresses—and the countess de Pomenars was so much struck at the sight, that she was incapable of paying the necessary compliments—"Nay, touch it," said lady Delacour—"it is so fine and so soft."—

At this dangerous moment her ladyship artfully let drop the comb; Clarence Hervey suddenly stooped to pick it up, totally forgetting his hoop and his character.—He threw down the music stand with his hoop—lady Delacour exclaimed, bravissima! and burst out a laughing.—Clarence Hervey acknowledged he had lost his bet—joined in the laugh, and declared

that fifty guineas was too little to pay for the sight of the finest hair that he had ever beheld.—" I declare he deserves a lock of *la belle chevelure* for that speech, miss Portman," cried lady Delacour, " I'll appeal to all the world—madame de Pomenars must have a lock to measure with madame de Grignan's?—Come, a second rape of the lock, Belinda."

Fortunately for Belinda, " the glittering forfex" was not immediately produced, as fine ladies do not now, as in former times, carry any such useless implements about with them.—

Such was the modest, graceful dignity of miss Portman's manners, that she escaped without even the charge of prudery—She retired to her own apartment as soon as she could.

" She passes on in unblenched majesty" —said lady Delacour.

" She is really a charming woman," said Clarence Hervey, in a low voice, to lady Delacour, drawing her into a recessed window; he in the same low voice con-

tinued—" Could I obtain a private audience of a few minutes when your ladyship is at leisure?—I have"—" I am never at leisure," interrupted lady Delacour, " but if you have any thing particular to say to me, as I guess you have, by—my skill in human nature—come here to my concert, to night, before the rest of the world—wait patiently in the music room, and perhaps I may grant you a private audience—As you had the grace not to call it a *tête à tête.*—In the mean time, my dear countess de Pomenars, had not we better take off our hoops."

In the evening Clarence Hervey was in the music room a considerable time before lady Delacour appeared; how patiently he waited is not known to any one but himself.—

" Have not I given you time to compose a charming speech," said lady Delacour as she entered the room—" but make it as short as you can, unless you wish that miss Portman should hear it, for she will be down stairs in three minutes."

"In one word then, my dear lady Delacour, can you, and will you, make my peace with miss Portman—I am much concerned about that foolish razor-strop dialogue, which she overheard at lady Singleton's."—

"You are concerned that she overheard it—no doubt."

"No," said Clarence Hervey, "I am rejoiced that she overheard it, since it has been the means of convincing me of my mistake; but I am concerned that I had the presumption and injustice to judge of miss Portman so hastily.—I am convinced, that though she is a niece of Mrs. Stanhope's, she has dignity of mind, and simplicity of character.—Will you, my dear lady Delacour, tell her so?"

"Stay," interrupted lady Delacour; "let me get it by heart—I should have made a terrible bad messenger of the gods and goddesses, for I never in my life could, like Iris, repeat a message in the same words in which it was delivered to me.—Let me see—'Dignity of mind,

and simplicity of character,' was not it? May not I say at once, 'my dear Belinda, Clarence Hervey desires me to tell you, that he is convinced you are an angel?'— That single word *angel* is so expressive, so comprehensive, so comprehensible, it contains, believe me, all that can be said or imagined on these occasions, *de part et d'autre*."

"But," said Mr. Hervey, "perhaps miss Portman has heard the song of—

'What know we of angels,
'I meant it in joke.'"

"Then you are not in jest, but in downright sober earnest?—Ha!" said lady Delacour, with an arch look, "I did not know it was already come to *this* with you."

And her ladyship, turning to her piano forte, played—

'There was a young man in Ballinacrasy,
'Who wanted a wife to make him un*asy*,
'And thus in gentle strains he spoke her,
'Arrah will you marry me, my dear Ally Croker?'

"No, no," exclaimed Clarence, laughing, "it is not come to *that* with me yet, lady Delacour, I promise you; but is not it possible to say, that a young lady has dignity of mind, and simplicity of character, without having or suggesting any thoughts of marriage?"

"You make a most proper, but not sufficiently emphatic difference between having, or suggesting such thoughts," said lady Delacour.—"A gentleman sometimes finds it for his interest, his honour, or his pleasure, to suggest what he would not for the world promise—I mean perform."

"A scoundrel," cried Clarence Hervey, "not a gentleman, may find it for his honour, or his interest, or his pleasure, to promise what he would not perform—but I am not a scoundrel—I never made any promise to man or woman, that I did not keep faithfully—I am not a swindler in love."

"And yet," said lady Delacour, "you

would have no scruple to trifle or flatter a woman out of her heart."

"*Cela est selon!*" said Clarence smiling, "a fair exchange you know is no robbery.—When a fine woman robs me of my heart, surely lady Delacour could not expect, that I should make no attempt upon hers."—"Is this part of my message to miss Portman," said lady Delacour?—"As your ladyship pleases," said Clarence, "I trust entirely to your ladyship's discretion."

"Why I really have a great deal of discretion," said lady Delacour, "but you trust too much to it, when you expect that I should execute, both with propriety and success, the delicate commission of telling a young lady who is under my protection, that a young gentleman who is a professed admirer of mine, is in love with her, but has no thoughts, and wishes to suggest no thoughts of marriage."

"In love!" exclaimed Clarence Hervey, "but when did I ever use the ex-

pression? In speaking of miss Portman, I simply expressed esteem and ad—— O, no *and*——"

"No additions," said lady Delacour, "content yourself with esteem—simply —and miss Portman is safe, and you too— I presume.—Apropos; pray, Clarence, how do your esteem and *admiration* (I may go as far as that, may not I?) of miss Portman agree with your admiration of lady Delacour?"

"Perfectly well," replied Clarence, "for all the world must be sensible, that Clarence Hervey is a man of too much taste to compare a country novice in wit and accomplishments, to lady Delacour. —He might, as men of genius sometimes do, look forward to the idea of forming a country novice for a wife.—A man must marry some time or other—but my hour, thank Heaven, is not come yet."

"Thank Heaven!" said lady Delacour, "for you know, a married man is lost to the world of fashion and gallantry."

"Not more so, I should hope, than a married woman," said Clarence Hervey. —Here a loud knocking at the door announced the arrival of company to the concert.—"You will make my peace, you promise me, with miss Portman," cried Clarence, eagerly.

"Yes, I will make your peace, and you shall see Belinda smile upon you once more, upon condition," continued lady Delacour, speaking very quickly, as if she was hurried by the sound of people coming up stairs—"but we'll talk of that another time."

"Nay, nay, my dear lady Delacour, now, now," said Clarence, seizing her hand.—Upon condition! upon what condition?"

"Upon condition that you do a little job for me—indeed for Belinda.—She is to go with me to the birthnight—and she has often hinted to me, that our horses are shockingly shabby for people of our condition.—I know she wishes, that upon such an occasion—her first appearance at

court, you know—we should go in style. —Now my dear positive lord has *said*, he will not let us have a pair of the handsomest horses I ever saw, which are at Tatersal's, and on which Belinda, I know, has secretly set her heart, as I have openly in vain."

"Your ladyship and miss Portman cannot possibly set your hearts on any thing in vain—especially on any thing that it is in the power of Clarence Hervey to procure. Then," added he gallantly, kissing her hand, "may I thus seal my treaty of peace?"

"What audacity!—don't you see these people coming in?" cried lady Delacour, and she withdrew her hand, but with no great precipitation: she was evidently "at this moment, as in all the past," neither afraid nor ashamed, that Mr. Hervey's devotions to her should be paid in public. With much address she had satisfied herself as to his views, with respect to Belinda. She was convinced that he had no mmediate thoughts of matrimony; but

that if he were condemned to marry, miss Portman would be his wife.—As this did not interfere with her plans, lady Delacour was content.

CHAPTER VI.

WAYS AND MEANS.

WHEN lady Delacour repeated to miss Portman the message about "simplicity of mind, and dignity of character," she frankly said—

"Belinda, notwithstanding all this, observe, I'm determined to retain Clarence Hervey among the number of my public worshippers during my life—which you know cannot last long.—After I am gone, my dear, he'll be all your own, and of that I give you joy.—Posthumous fame is a silly thing, but posthumous jealousy is detestable."

There was one part of the conversation between Mr. Hervey and her ladyship, which she, in her great discretion, did not immediately repeat to miss Portman—that part which related to the horses.—In this transaction Belinda had no farther share, than having once, when her ladyship had the handsome horses brought for her to look at, assented to the opinion, that they were the handsomest horses she ever beheld.—Mr. Hervey, however gallantly he replied to her ladyship, was secretly vexed to find that Belinda had so little delicacy, as to permit her name to be employed in such a manner. He repented having used the improper expression of *dignity of mind*, and he relapsed into his former opinion of Mrs. Stanhope's niece. —A relapse is always more dangerous than the first disease.—He sent home the horses to lady Delacour, the next day, and addressed Belinda, when he met her, with the air of a man of gallantry, who thought that his peace had been cheaply made.—But in proportion as his manners

became more familiar, hers grew more reserved.—Lady Delacour rallied her upon *her prudery*, but in vain.—Clarence Hervey seemed to think, that her ladyship had not fulfilled her part of the bargain.—"Is not *smiling*," said he, "the epithet always applied to peace—yet I have not been able to obtain one smile from miss Portman since I have been promised peace." —Embarrassed by Mr. Hervey's reproaches, and provoked to find that Belinda was proof against all her raillery, lady Delacour grew quite ill-humoured towards her. Belinda, unconscious of having given any just cause of offence, was unmoved; and her ladyship's embarrassment increased.—At last, resuming all her former appearance of friendship and confidence, she suddenly exclaimed, one night after she had flattered Belinda into high spirits—

"Do you know, my dear, that I have been so ashamed of myself for this week past, that I have hardly dared to look you in the face.—I am sensible I was down-

right rude and cross to you one day—and ever since I have been penitent; and as all penitents are, very stupid and disagreeable, I am sure—but tell me you forgive my caprice, and lady Delacour will be herself again."

It was not difficult to obtain Belinda's forgiveness.

"Indeed," continued lady Delacour, "you are too good—but then, in my own justification I must stay, that I have more things to make me ill-humoured than most people have.—Now, my dear, that most obstinate of human beings, lord Delacour, has reduced me to the most terrible situation—I have made Clarence Hervey buy a pair of horses for me, and I cannot make my lord Delacour pay for them—but I forgot to tell you, that I took your name—not in vain indeed—in this business.—I told Clarence, that upon condition he would do this *job* for me, you would forgive him for all his sins, and —nay, my dear, why do you look as if I

had stabbed you to the heart—after all, I only drew upon your pretty mouth for a few smiles—Pray let me see whether it has actually forgotten *how* to smile."

Belinda was too much vexed at this instant to understand raillery.—She was inspired by anger with unwonted courage, and losing all fear of lady Delacour's wit, she very seriously expostulated with her ladyship upon having thus used her name, without her consent or knowledge. Belinda felt she was now in danger of being led into a situation, which might be fatal to her reputation and her happiness; and she was the more surprised at her ladyship, when she recollected the history she had so lately heard of Harriot Freke and colonel Lawless.

"You cannot but be sensible, lady Delacour," said Belinda, "that after the contempt I have heard Mr. Hervey express for match-making Mrs. Stanhope's nieces, I should degrade myself by any attempts to attract his attention.—No wit, no eloquence, can change my opinion

upon this subject—I cannot endure contempt."

"Very likely—no doubt"—interrupted lady Delacour, "but if you would only open your eyes, which heroines make it a principle never to do—or else there would be an end of the novel—if you would only open your eyes, you would see that this man is in love with you; and whilst you are afraid of his contempt, he is a hundred times more afraid of yours; and as long as you are each of you in such fear of you know not what—you must excuse me if I indulge myself in a little wholesome raillery."—Belinda smiled—"There now, one such smile as that for Clarence Hervey, and I am out of debt and danger," said lady Delacour.

"O, lady Delacour, why, why will you try your power over me, in this manner?" said Belinda.—"You know that I ought not to be persuaded to do what I am conscious is wrong.—But a few days ago you told me yourself, that Mr. Hervey

is—is not a marrying man; and a woman of your penetration must see that—that he only means to flirt with me.—I am not a match for Mr. Hervey in any respect.—He is a man of wit and gallantry—I am unpractised in the ways of the world.—I was not educated by my aunt Stanhope—I have only been with her a few years—I wish I had never been with her in my life."

"I'll take care Mr. Hervey shall know that," said lady Delacour, "but in the mean time, I do think any fair appraiser of delicate distresses would decide, that I am, all the circumstances considered, more to be pitied at this present moment than you are.—For the catastrophe of the business evidently is, that I must pay two hundred guineas for the horses some how or other."

"I can pay for them," exclaimed Belinda, "and will with the greatest pleasure.—I will not go to the birthnight—my dress is not bespoke.—Will two hundred

guineas pay for the horses?—O, take the money—pay Mr. Hervey, dear lady Delacour, and it will all be right."

"You are a charming girl," said lady Delacour, embracing her, "but how can I answer for it to my conscience, or to your aunt Stanhope, if you don't appear on the birthnight?—That cannot be, my dear; besides, you know Mrs. Franks will send home your drawing-room dress to-day, and it would be so foolish to be presented for nothing—not to go to the birthnight afterwards.—If you say *a* you must say *b*."

"Then," said Belinda, "I will not go to the drawing-room."—"Not go, my dear! What, throw away fifty guineas for nothing! Really I never saw any one so lavish of her money, and so economic of her smiles."

"Surely," said miss Portman, "it is better for me to throw away fifty guineas, poor as I am, than to hazard the happiness of my life.—Your ladyship knows that if I say *a* to Mr. Hervey, I must say *b*.—

No, no, my dear lady Delacour—here is the draft for two hundred guineas—pay Mr. Hervey, for Heaven's sake, and there is an end of the business."

"What a positive child it is!—Well, then it shall not be forced to say the a, b, c, of Cupid's alphabet, to that terrible pedagogue Clarence Hervey, till it pleases—but seriously, miss Portman, I'm concerned that you will make me take this draft.—It is absolutely robbing you.—But lord Delacour's the person you must blame—it is all his obstinacy—having once said he would not pay for the horses, he would see them and me and the whole human race expire, before he would change his silly mind.—Next month I shall have it in my power, my dear, to repay you with a thousand thanks—and in a few months more we shall have another birthday, and a new star shall appear in the firmament of fashion, and it shall be called Belinda.—In the mean time, my dear, upon second thoughts, perhaps we can get Mrs. Franks to dispose

of your drawing-room dress to some person of taste, and you may keep your fifty guineas for the next occasion.—I'll see what can be done—adieu—a thousand thanks, silly child as you are."

Mrs. Franks at first declared, that it would be an impossibility to dispose of miss Portman's dress, though she would do any thing upon earth to oblige lady Delacour—however, ten guineas made every thing possible. Belinda rejoiced, at having, as she thought, extricated herself at so cheap a rate; and well pleased with her own conduct, she wrote to her aunt Stanhope, to inform her of as much of the transaction as she could disclose, without betraying lady Delacour. "Her ladyship," she said, "had immediate occasion for two hundred guineas, and to accommodate her with this sum, she had given up the idea of going to court."

The tenour of miss Portman's letter will be sufficiently apparent from Mrs. Stanhope's answer.

MRS. STANHOPE TO MISS PORTMAN.

Bath, June 2d.

"I CANNOT but feel some astonishment, Belinda, at your very extraordinary conduct, and more extraordinary letter.—What you can mean by principles and delicacy, I own I don't pretend to understand, when I see you not only forget the respect that is due to the opinions and advice of the aunt, to whom you owe every thing; but you take upon yourself to lavish her money, without common honesty.—I send you 200 guineas, and desire you to go to court—you lend my 200 guineas to lady Delacour, and inform me that as you think yourself bound in honour to her ladyship, you cannot explain all the particulars to me, otherwise, you are sure I should approve of the reasons which have influenced you.—Mighty satisfactory, truly!—And then to mend the matter, you tell me that you do not think, that in your situation in life it is neces-

sary that you should go to court. Your opinions and mine, you add, differ in many points.—Then I must say that you are as ungrateful, as you are presumptuous—for I am not such a novice in the affairs of this world, as to be ignorant that when a young lady professes to be of a different opinion from her friends, it is only a prelude to something worse.—She begins by saying, that she is determined to think for herself; and she is determined to act for herself—and then it is all over with her—and all the money, &c. that has been spent upon her education, is so much dead loss to her friends.

"Now I look upon it, that a young girl who has been brought up, and brought forward in the world as you have been by connexions, is bound to be guided implicitly by them in all her conduct.—What should you think of a man, who, after he had been brought into parliament by a friend, would go and vote against that friend's opinions.—You do not want sense, Belinda—you perfectly understand

me—and consequently, your errours I must impute to the defect of your heart, and not of your judgment.—I see, that on account of the illness of the princess—the king's birthday is put off for a fortnight. If you manage properly, and if (unknown to lady ———, who certainly has not used you well in this business, and to whom therefore you owe no peculiar delicacy) you make lord ——— sensible how much your aunt Stanhope is disappointed and displeased (as I most truly am) at your intention of missing this opportunity of appearing at court; it is ten to one but his lordship, who has not made it a point to refuse your request, I suppose, will pay you your two hundred guineas. —You of course will make proper acknowledgments; but at the same time, entreat that his lordship will not *commit* you with his lady, as she might be offended at your application to him.—I understand from an intimate acquaintance of his, that you are a great favourite of his lordship's, and though an obstinate, he is a good-

natured man, and can have no fear of being governed by you; consequently he will do just as you would have him.

"Then you have an opportunity of representing the thing, in the prettiest manner imaginable, to lady —— —— as an instance of her lord's consideration for her. —So you will oblige all parties (a very desirable thing) without costing yourself one penny, and go to the birthnight after all.—And this only by using a little address—without which nothing is to be done in this world.

"Yours *affectionately*, (if you follow my advice,)

SELINA STANHOPE."

Belinda, though she could not, consistently with what she thought right, follow the advice so artfully given to her in this epistle, was yet extremely concerned to find, that she had incurred the displeasure of an aunt to whom she thought herself under obligations. She resolved to lay by

as much as she possibly could, from the interest of her fortune, and to repay the two hundred guineas to Mrs. Stanhope: she was conscious that she had no right to lend this money to lady Delacour, if her aunt had expressly desired that she should spend it only on her court dress; but this had not distinctly been expressed, when Mrs. Stanhope sent her niece the draughts. That lady was in the habit of speaking and writing ambiguously, so that even those who knew her best, were frequently in doubt how to interpret her words.—Yet she was extremely displeased when her hints, and her half expressed wishes were not understood.—Beside the concern she felt from the thoughts of having displeased her aunt, Belinda was both vexed and mortified, to perceive that in Clarence Hervey's manner towards her there was not the change, which she had expected that her conduct would naturally produce.

One day she was surprised by his reproaching her for caprice in having given

up her intentions of going to court. Lady Delacour's embarrassment whilst Mr. Hervey spoke, Belinda attributed to her ladyship's desire that Clarence should not know, that she had been obliged to borrow the money to pay him for the horses. Belinda thought that this was a species of mean pride; but she made it a point to keep her ladyship's secret: she therefore slightly answered Mr. Hervey, "that she wondered that a man, who is so well acquainted with the female sex, should be surprised at any instance of caprice from a woman."—The conversation then took another turn, and whilst they were talking on indifferent subjects, in came lord Delacour's man, Champfort, with Mrs. Stanhope's draught for two hundred guineas, which the coachmaker's man had just brought back, because miss Portman had forgotten to endorse it.—Belinda's astonishment was almost as great at this instant, as lady Delacour's confusion.—

"Come this way, my dear, and we'll find you a pen and ink—you need not

wait, Champfort—but tell the man to wait for the draught—miss Portman will endorse it immediately."—And she took Belinda into another room.

"Good Heavens! Has not this money been paid to Mr. Hervey?" exclaimed Belinda.

"No, my dear, but I will take all the blame upon myself; or, which will do just as well for you, throw it all upon my better half—my lord Delacour would not pay for my new carriage.—The coach-maker, insolent animal, would not let it out of his yard without a hundred guineas in ready money.—Now you know I had the horses, and what could I do with the horses without the carriage. Clarence Hervey, I knew, could wait for his money better than a poor devil of a coach-maker, so I paid the coach-maker, and a few months sooner or later can make no difference to Clarence, who rolls in gold, my dear—if that will be any comfort to you, as I hope it will."

"O, what will he think of me!" said Belinda.

"Nay, what will he think of *me*, child?"

"Lady Delacour," said Belinda, in a firmer tone than she had ever before spoken—"I must insist upon this draught's being given to Mr. Hervey."

"Absolutely impossible, my dear.—I cannot take it from the coach-maker,—he has sent home the carriage—the thing's done, and cannot be undone.—But come, since I know nothing else will make you easy, I will take this mighty favour from Mr. Hervey entirely upon my own conscience.—You cannot object to that, for you are not the keeper of my conscience—I will tell Clarence the whole business, and do you honour due, my dear—so endorse the note, whilst I go and sound both the praises of your dignity of mind, and simplicity of character, &c. &c. &c. &c. &c."—And her ladyship broke away from Belinda, returned to Clarence Hervey, and told the whole affair with that pecu-

liar grace with which she knew how to make a good story of a bad one.—Clarence was as favourable an auditor at this time as she could possibly have found, for no human being could value money less than he did, and all sense of her ladyship's meanness was lost in his joy at discovering that Belinda was worthy of his esteem.—Now he felt in its fullest extent all the power she had over his heart, and he was upon the point of declaring his attachment to her, when—"*malheureusement,*"—sir Philip Baddely and Mr. Rochfort announced themselves by the noise they made on the staircase. These were the young men who had spoken in such a contemptuous manner at lady Singleton's of the match-making Mrs. Stanhope and her nieces.—Mr. Hervey was anxious that they should not penetrate into the state of his heart, and he concealed his emotion by instantly assuming that kind of rattling gayety, which always delighted his companions, who were ever in want of some one to set their stagnant ideas in

motion. At last they insisted upon carrying Clarence away with them to taste some wines for sir Philip Baddely.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SERPENTINE RIVER.

IN his way to St. James's street, where the wine merchant lived, sir Philip Baddely picked up several young men of his acquaintance, who were all eager to see a trial of *taste*, of epicurean taste—between the baronet and Clarence Hervey. Amongst his other accomplishments our hero piqued himself upon the exquisite accuracy of his organs of taste. He neither loved wine, nor was he fond of eating; but at fine dinners, with young men who were real epicures, Hervey gave himself the airs of a connoisseur, and

asserted superiority even in judging of wine and sauces.—Having gained immortal honour at an entertainment, by gravely protesting that some turtle would have been excellent if it had not been done *a bubble too much*, he presumed, elate as he was with the applauses of the company, to assert, that no man in England had a more correct taste than himself.—Sir Philip Baddely could not passively submit to this arrogance; he loudly proclaimed, that though he would not dispute Mr. Hervey's judgment as far as eating was concerned, yet he would defy him as a connoisseur in wines, and he offered to submit the competition to any eminent wine-merchant in London, and to some common friend of acknowledged taste and experience.—Mr. Rochfort was chosen as the common friend of acknowledged taste and experience; and a fashionable wine-merchant was pitched upon, to decide with him the merits of these candidates for bacchanalian fame. Sir Philip, who was just going to furnish his cellars, was a person of importance to

the wine-merchant, who produced accordingly his choicest treasures. — Sir Philip and Clarence tasted of all in their turns; Sir Philip with real, and Clarence with affected gravity; and they delivered their opinions of the positive and comparative merits of each. The wine-merchant evidently, as Mr. Hervey thought, leaned towards sir Philip.—" Upon my word, sir Philip, you are right—that wine is the best I have—you certainly have a most discriminating taste," said the complaisant wine-merchant.—" I'll tell you what," cried sir Philip, " the thing is this—by G— now there's no possibility now—no possibility now by G— of imposing upon me."—" Then," said Clarence Hervey, " would you engage to tell the difference between these two wines ten times running, blindfold?"—" Ten times, that's nothing," replied sir Philip; " yes, fifty times, I would, by G—."

But when it came to the trial, sir Philip had nothing left but oaths in his own favour. Clarence Hervey was victorious,

and his sense of the importance of this victory was much increased by the fumes of the wine, which began to operate upon his brain.—His triumph was, as he said it ought to be, bacchanalian—he laughed and sang with Anacreontic spirit, and finished by declaring, that he deserved to be crowned with vine-leaves.—" Dine with me, Clarence," said Rochfort, " and we'll crown you with three times three—and," whispered he to sir Philip— " we'll have another trial after dinner."

" But as it's not near dinner time yet—only half past six by me—what shall we do with ourselves till dinner time?" said sir Philip, yawning pathetically.

Clarence, not being used to drink in a morning, though all his companions were, was much affected by the wine, and Rochfort proposed that they should take a turn in the park to cool Hervey's head.—To Hyde-park they repaired; sir Philip boasting all the way they walked, of the superiour strength of his head.

Clarence protested that his own was

stronger than any man's in England, and observed, that at this instant he walked better than any person in company, sir Philip Baddely not excepted. Now, sir Philip Baddely was a noted pedestrian, and he immediately challenged our hero to walk with him for any money he pleased.—"Done," said Clarence, "for ten guineas—for any money you please"-and instantly they set out to walk, as Rochfort cried "one, two, three, and away; keep the path, and whichever reaches that elm tree first has it."

They were exactly even for some yards, then Clarence got ahead of sir Philip, and he reached the elm tree first; but as he waved his hat, exclaiming, "Clarence has won the day," sir Philip came up with his companions, and coolly informed him that he had lost his wager—"lost! lost! lost! Clarence; fairly lost."

"Didn't I reach the tree first," said Clarence.

"Yes," answered his companions, "but you didn't keep the path.—You turned

out of the way when you met that crowd of children, yonder.—Now *I*, said sir Philip, dashed fairly through them—kept the path, and won my bet."

"But," said Hervey, "would you have had me run over that little child, who was stooping down just in my way?"

"*I*, not I," said sir Philip, "but I would have you go through with your civility—If a man will be polite, he must pay for his politeness sometimes.—You said you'd lay me *any money* I pleased, recollect—now I'm very moderate—and as you are a particular friend, Clarence, I'll only take your ten guineas."

A loud laugh from his companions provoked Clarence; they were glad "to have a laugh against him," because he excited universal envy, by the real superiority of his talents, and by his perpetually taking the lead in those trifles which were beneath his ambition, and exactly suited to engage the attention of his associates.

"Be it so—and welcome—I'll pay ten

guineas "for having better manners than any of you," cried Hervey, laughing; "but remember, though I've lost this bet, I don't give up my pedestrian fame.—Sir Philip, there are no women to throw golden apples in my way now, and no children for me to stumble over; I dare you to another trial—double or quit."

"I'm off by G—," said sir Philip—"I'm too hot, damme, to walk with you any more—but I'm your man if you've a mind for a swim—damme, here's the Serpentine river, Clarence.—Hey? damn it!—Hey?"

Sir Philip and all his companions knew that Clarence had never learned to swim.

"You may wink at one another, as wisely as you please," said Clarence, "but come on my boys—I *am* your man for a swim—a hundred guineas upon it"—

——————' Darest thou, Rochfort, now,
' Leap in with me into this weedy flood.
' And swim to yonder point,'

and instantly Hervey, who had in his con-

fused head some recollection of an essay of Dr. Franklin's on swimming, by which he fancied that he could ensure at once his safety and his fame, threw off his coat and jumped into the river—luckily he was not in boots—Rochfort began coolly to undress himself under the trees, and all the other young men stood laughing by the river side.—" Who the devil are these two that seem to be making up to us," said sir Philip, looking at two gentlemen who were coming towards them.—" St. George, hey, you who know every body? —The foremost is Percival of Oakly Park, I think, 'pon my honour," replied Mr. St. George—and he then began to settle how many thousands a year Mr. Percival was worth; this point was not decided, when the gentlemen came up to the spot where sir Philip was standing.

The child for whose sake Clarence Hervey had lost his bet was Mr. Percival's, and he came to thank him for his civility.—The gentleman who accompanied Mr. Percival was an old friend of

Clarence Hervey's, he had met him abroad, but had not seen him for some years.

"Pray gentlemen," said he to sir Philip and his party—"is Mr. Clarence Hervey amongst you? I think I saw him pass by me just now."

"Damn it, yes, where is Clary though?" exclaimed sir Philip, suddenly recollecting himself.—Clarence Hervey at this instant was drowning, he had got out of his depth, and had struggled in vain to recover himself.

"Curse me, if it's not all over with Clary," continued sir Philip.—"Do any of you see his head any where? Damn you, Rochfort, yonder it is."

"Damme, so it is," said Rochfort—"but he's so heavy in his clothes, he'd pull me down along with him to Davy's Locker—damme if I'll go after him."

"Damn it, though, can't some of ye swim?—Can't some of ye jump in?" cried sir Philip, turning to his companion—"Damn it, Clarence will go to the bottom."

And so he inevitably would have done, had not Mr. Percival at this instant leaped into the river, and seized hold of the drowning Clarence. It was with great difficulty that he dragged him to shore.—Sir Philip's party, as soon as the danger was over, officiously offered their assistance. Clarence Hervey was absolutely senseless.—" Damn it, what shall we do with him now," said sir Philip—" Damn it, we must call some of the people from the boat-house, he's as heavy as lead—damn me if I know what to do with him."

Whilst sir Philip was damning himself, Mr. Percival ran to the boat-house for assistance, and they carried the body into the house: the elderly gentleman who had accompanied Mr. Percival now made his way through the midst of the noisy crowd, and directed what should be done to restore Mr. Hervey's suspended animation. Whilst he was employed in this benevolent manner, Clarence's worthy friends were sneering at him, and whis-

pering to one another—" Ecod he talks as if he was a doctor," said Rochfort.

" 'Pon honour I do believe," said St. George, " he is the famous Dr. X——; I met him at a circulating library t'other day."

" Dr. X——the writer, do you mean," said sir Philip—" then damn me we'd better get out of his way as fast as we can, or he'll have some of us down in black and white, and curse me if I should choose to meet with myself in a book."—" No danger of that," said Rochfort, " for how can one meet with oneself in a book, sir Philip, if one never opens one. —By G— that's the true way !"

" But 'pon my honour," said St. George, " I should like of all things to see myself in print ; 'twould make one famously famous."

" Damn me if I don't flatter myself, though, one can make oneself famous enough to all intents and purposes, without having any thing to say to these author

geniusses.—You're a famous fellow, faith, to want to see yourself in print—I'll publish this in Bond street—damn it, in point of famousness, I'd sport my random against all the books that ever were read or written, damn me—but what are we doing here?" "Hervey's in good hands," said sir Philip—"and this here's a cursed stupid lounge for us—besides it's getting towards dinner time, so my voice is, let's be off, and we can leave St. George (who has such a famous mind to be in the doctor's books) to bring Clary after us, when he's ready for dinner and good company again, you know, ha! ha! ha!

Away the faithful friends went to the important business of their day.

When Clarence Hervey came to his senses, he started up, rubbed his eyes, and looked about, exclaiming—"What's all this?—Where am I?—Where's Baddely?—Where's Rochfort?—Where are they all?"

"Gone home to dinner," answered Mr.

St. George, "who was a hanger on of sir Philip's.—But they left me to bring you after them.—Faith, Clary, you've had a squeak for your life—'pon my honour, we thought at one time it was all over with you—but you're a tough one—We shan't have to 'pour over your grave a full bottle of red,' as yet my boy—you'll *do* as well as ever.—So I'll step and call a coach for you Clary, and we shall be at dinner as soon as the best of 'em after all, by jingo.—I leave you in good hands with the doctor here, that brought you to life, and the gentleman that dragged you out of the water."—"Here's a note for you," whispered Mr. St. George, as he leaned over Clarence Hervey—"Here's a note for you from sir Philip and Rochfort—read it, do you mind, *to yourself*."

"If I can," said Clarence—"but sir Philip writes a *bloody* bad hand."

"O, he's a *baronet*," said St. George, "ha! ha! ha!"—and charmed with his own wit, he left the room.

Clarence with some difficulty deciphered the note, which contained these words:

"QUIZ the doctor, Clary, as soon as you are up to it—he's an author—so fair game—quiz the doctor, and we'll drink your health with three times three in Rochfort's Burgundy.

Yours, &c.

PHIL. BADDELY.

"P. S. Burn this when read."

With the request contained in the postcript Clarence immediately complied; he threw the note into the fire with indignation, the moment that he had read it, and turning towards the gentleman to whom it alluded, he began to express in the strongest terms his gratitude for their benevolence.—But he stopped short in the midst of his acknowledgments, when he discovered to whom he was speaking.

"Dr. X——!" cried he, "is it possible?—how rejoiced I am to see you—and how rejoiced I am to be obliged to you—there is not a man in England to whom I would rather be obliged."

"You are not acquainted with Mr. Percival, I believe," said Dr. X——, "give me leave, Mr. Percival, to introduce to you the young gentleman whose life you have saved, and whose life—though by the company in which you found him you might not think so—is worth saving.—This sir, is no less a man that Mr. Clarence Hervey—of whose universal genius you have just had a specimen; for which he was crowned, as he well deserved, by the God of the Serpentine river with sedges.—Do not be so unjust as to imagine, that he has any of the presumption which is sometimes the chief characteristic of a man of universal genius.—Mr. Clarence Hervey is, without exception, the most humble man of my acquaintance, for whilst all good judges would think him fit company for Mr. Percival, he has the

humility to think himself upon a level with Mr. Rochfort, and sir Philip Baddely."

"You have lost as little of your satirical wit, Dr. X——, as of your active benevolence, I perceive, said Clarence Hervey, "since I met you abroad.—But as I cannot submit to your unjust charge of humility, will you tell me where you are to be found in town, and to morrow"—"to morrow—and to morrow—and to morrow," said Dr. X—— "why not to day?"—"I am engaged," said Clarence, hesitating and laughing—"I am unfortunately engaged to day to dine with Mr. Rochfort, and sir Philip Baddely—and in the evening I am to be at lady Delacour's."

"Lady Delacour!—not the same lady Delacour whom four years ago, when we met at Florence, you compared to the Venus de Medicis—no, no, it cannot be the same, a goddess of four years standing! incredible!"

"Incredible as it seems," said Clarence, "it is true—I admire her ladyship more than ever I did."

"Like a true connoisseur," said Dr. X——, "you admire a fine picture, the older it grows—I hear that her ladyship's face is really one of the finest pieces of painting extant, with the advantage of

'Ev'ry grace which time alone can grant.'

"Come, come, Doctor, X——," cried Mr. Percival, "no more wit at lady Delacour's expense—I have a fellow feeling for Mr. Hervey."

"Why you are not in love with her ladyship, are you?" said Dr. X——. "I am not in love with lady Delacour's picture of herself," replied Mr. Percival, "but I was once in love with the original."

"How?—When?—Where?" cried Clarence Hervey, in a tone totally different from that in which he had first addressed Mr. Percival.

"To morrow you shall know the how, the when, and the where," said Mr. Percival, "here's your friend, Mr. St. George, and his coach."—"The deuce

take him," said Clarence—" but tell me, is it possible that you are not in love with her still?—and why?"—" Why?" said Mr. Percival—" why—come to morrow, as you have promised, to Upper Grosvenor street, and let me introduce you to lady Anne Percival—she can answer your question better than I can—if not entirely to your satisfaction, at least entirely to mine, which is more surprising, as the lady is my wife."

By this time, Clarence Hervey was equipped in a dry suit of clothes—and by the strength of an excellent constitution, which he had never injured, even amongst his dissipated associates, he had recovered from the effects of his late imprudence.—" Clary, let's away, here's the coach," said Mr. St. George—" Why my boy that's a famous fellow, faith! Why you look the better for being drowned—'pon honour, if I was you, I would jump into the Serpentine river once a day."—" If I could always be sure of such good friends to pull me out," said Hervey.—" Pray St.

George, by the by, what were you, and Rochfort, and sir Philip, and all the rest of my friends doing, whilst I was drowning?"

"I can't say particularly, upon my soul," replied Mr. St. George, "for my own part, I was in boots, so you know I was out of the question.—But what signifies all that now?—Come, come, we had best think of looking after our dinners."

Clarence Hervey, who had very quick feelings, was extremely hurt by the indifference which his dear friends had shown, when his life was in danger; he was apt to believe that he was really an object of affection and admiration amongst his companions, and that though they were neither very wise, nor very witty, they were certainly very good natured. When they had forfeited by their late conduct these claims to his regard, his partiality for them was changed into contempt.

"You had better come home and dine with me, Mr. Hervey," said Mr. Percival, "if you be not absolutely engaged, for

here is your physician, who tells me that temperance is necessary for a man just recovered from drowning, and Mr. Rochfort keeps too good a table, I am told, for one in your condition."

Clarence accepted of this invitation with a degree of pleasure which perfectly astonished Mr. St. George.

"Every man knows his own affairs best," said he to Clarence, as he stepped into his hackney coach—"but for my share, I will do my friend Rochfort the justice to say, that no one lives as well as he does."—

'If to live well mean nothing but to eat,'

said Clarence.

"Now," said Dr. X——, looking at his watch, "it will be eight o'clock by the time we get to upper Grosvenor street, and lady Anne will probably have waited dinner for us about two hours, which I apprehend is sufficient to try the patience of any woman but Griselday.—Do not," continued he, turning to Clarence Her-

vey, "expect to see an old fashioned, spiritless, patient Griselda, in lady Anne Percival—I can assure you that she is—but I will neither tell you what she is, nor what she is not.—Every man, who has any abilities, likes to have the pleasure and honour of finding out a character by his own penetration, instead of having it forced upon him at full length in capital letters of gold, finely emblazoned and illuminated by the hand of some injudicious friend.—Every child thinks the violet of his own finding the sweetest.—I spare you any farther allusions and illustrations," concluded Dr. X——, "for here we are, thank God, in Upper Grosvenor street."

CHAPTER VIII.

A FAMILY PARTY.

THEY found lady Anne Percival in the midst of her children; who all turned their healthy, rosy, intelligent faces towards the door the moment that they heard their father's voice. Clarence Hervey was so much struck with the expression of happiness in lady Anne's countenance, that he absolutely forgot to compare her beauty with lady Delacour's. Whether her eyes were large or small, blue or hazle, he could not tell; nay, he might have been puzzled if he had been asked the colour of her hair.—Whether she were handsome by the rules of

art, he knew not; but he felt that she had the essential charm of beauty, the power of prepossessing the heart immediately in her favour. The effect of her manners, like that of her beauty, was rather to be felt than described. Every body was at ease in her company, and none thought themselves called upon to admire her.—To Clarence Hervey, who had been used to the brilliant and *exigeante* lady Delacour, this respite from the fatigue of admiration was peculiarly agreeable. The unconstrained cheerfulness of lady Anne Percival spoke a mind at ease, and immediately imparted happiness by exciting sympathy; but in lady Delacour's wit and gayety there was an appearance of art and effort, which often destroyed the pleasure that she wished to communicate.—Some people may admire, but none can sympathise with affectation.—Mr. Hervey was, perhaps, unusually disposed to reflection, by having just escaped from drowning; for he made all these comparisons, and came to this conclusion with the accuracy

of a metaphysician, who has been accustomed to study cause and effect—indeed there was no species of knowledge for which he had not taste and talents, though, to please fools, he too often affected "the bliss of ignorance."

The children at lady Anne Percival's happened to be looking at some gold fish, which were in a glass globe, and Dr. X——, who was a general favourite with the younger, as well as with the elder part of the family, was seized upon the moment he entered the room: a pretty little girl of five years old took him prisoner by the flap of the coat, whilst two of her brothers assailed him with questions about the ears, eyes, and fins of fishes. One of the little boys flipped the glass globe, and observed, that the fish immediately came to the surface of the water, and seemed to hear the noise very quickly; but his brother doubted, whether the fish heard the noise, and remarked, that they might be disturbed by seeing or feeling

the motion of the water, when the glass was struck.

Dr. X—— observed, that this was a very learned dispute, and that the question had been discussed by no less a person than the abbé Nollet; and he related some of the ingenious experiments tried by that gentleman to decide, whether fishes can or cannot hear.—Whilst the doctor was speaking, Clarence Hervey was struck with the intelligent countenance of one of the little auditors—a girl of about ten or twelve years old; he was surprised to discover in her features, though not in their expression, a singular resemblance to lady Delacour. He remarked this to Mr. Percival, and the child, who overheard him, blushed as red as scarlet.—Dinner was announced at this instant, and Clarence Hervey thought no more of the circumstance, attributing the girl's blush to confusion at being looked at so earnestly.—One of the little boys whispered as they were going down to dinner,

"Helena, I do believe that this is the good natured gentleman, who went out of the path to make room for us, instead of running over us as the other man did."— The children agreed that Clarence Hervey certainly was *the good natured gentleman*, and upon the strength of this observation, one of the boys posted himself next to Clarence at dinner, and by all the little playful manœuvres in his power, endeavoured to show his gratitude, and to cultivate a friendship which had been thus auspiciously commenced. — Mr. Hervey, who piqued himself upon being able always to suit his conversation to his companions, distinguished himself at dinner by an account of the Chinese fishing-bird, from which he passed to the various ingenious methods of fishing practised by the Russian Cossacks. He asked Dr. X—— what he thought could be the cause of the prejudice, which prevents the Russian peasants from eating the chad, which is so plentiful in their fisheries.— Then from modern he went to ancient

fish, and he talked of that which was so much admired by the Roman epicures for exhibiting a succession of beautiful colours whilst it is dying; and which was, upon that account, always suffered to die in the presence of the guests, as part of the entertainment.—Clarence was led on by the questions of the children from fishes to birds; he spoke of the Roman aviaries, which were so constructed, as to keep from the sight of the prisoners that they contained, "the fields, woods, and every object which might remind them of their former liberty."—From birds Clarence Hervey was going on to beasts, when he was nearly struck dumb by the forbidding severity, with which an elderly lady, who sat opposite to him, fixed her eyes upon him.—He had not, till this instant, paid the smallest attention to her; but her stern countenance was now so strongly contrasted with the approving looks of the children who sat next to her, that Clarence could not help remarking it.—He asked her to do him the honour to

drink a glass of wine with him.—She declined doing him that honour; observing, that she never drank more than one glass of wine at dinner, and that she had just taken one with Mr. Percival.—Her manner was well-bred, but haughty in the extreme; and she was so passionate, that her anger sometimes conquered even her politeness. Her dislike to Clarence Hervey was apparent, even in her silence.—"If the old gentlewoman have taken an antipathy to me at first sight, I cannot help it," thought he, and he went on to the beasts. The boy, who sat next him, had asked some questions about the proboscis of the elephant, and Mr. Hervey mentioned Ives's account of the elephants in India, who have been set to watch young children, and who draw them back gently with their trunks, when they go out of bounds. He talked next of the unicorn; and addressing himself to Dr. X—— and Mr. Percival, he declared, that in his opinion Herodotus did not deserve to be called the father of lies; he cited the

mammoth to prove, that the apocryphal chapter in the history of beasts should not be contemned—that it would in all probability be soon established as true history.—The desert was on the table before Clarence had done with the mammoth.

As the butler put a fine dish of cherries upon the table, he said,

"My lady, these cherries are a present from the old gardener to miss Delacour."

"Set them before miss Delacour then," said lady Anne. "Helena, my dear, distribute your own cherries."

At the name of Delacour, Clarence Hervey, though his head was still half full of the mammoth, looked round in astonishment, and when he saw the cherries placed before the young lady, whose resemblance to lady Delacour he had before observed, he could not help exclaiming,

"That young lady then is not a daughter of your ladyship's?"

"No; but I love her as well as if she were," replied lady Anne.—"What were you saying about the mammoth?"

"That the mammoth is supposed to be——" but interrupting himself, Clarence said, in an inquiring tone—"A *niece* of lady Delacour's?

"Her ladyship's *daughter*, sir," said the severe old lady, in a voice more terrific than her looks.

"Shall I give you some strawberries, Mr. Hervey," said lady Anne, "or will you let Helena help you to some cherries?"

"Her ladyship's *daughter!*" exclaimed Clarence Hervey in a tone of surprise.

"Some cherries, sir?" said Helena, but her voice faltered so much, that she could hardly utter the words.

Clarence perceived that he had been the cause of her agitation, though he knew not precisely by what means, and he now applied himself in silence to the picking of his strawberries with great diligence.

The ladies soon afterward withdrew, and as Mr. Percival did not touch upon the subject again, Clarence forbore to ask any

farther questions, though he was considerably surprised by this sudden discovery.—When he went into the drawing-room to tea, he found his friend, the stern old lady, speaking in a high declamatory tone.—The words which he heard as he came into the room were—

"If there were no Clarence Hervey's, there would be no lady Delacour's."—Clarence bowed, as if he had received a high compliment—the old lady walked away to an antichamber, fanning herself with great energy.

"Mrs. Margaret Delacour," said lady Anne, in a low voice to Hervey, "is an aunt of lord Delacour's.—A woman whose heart is warmer than her temper."

"And that is never *cool*," said a young lady, who sat next to lady Anne—"I call Mrs. Margaret Delacour the volcano; I'm sure I am never in her company without dreading an explosion.—Every now and then out comes, with a tremendous noise, fire, and smoke, and rubbish."

"And precious minerals," said lady Anne, "amongst the rubbish."

"But the best of it, is, continued the young lady, that she is seldom in a passion without making a hundred mistakes, for which she is usually obliged afterward to ask a thousand pardons."

"By that account," said lady Anne, "which I believe to be just, her contrition is always ten times as great as her offences."

"Now you talk of contrition, lady Anne," said Mr. Hervey, "I should think of my own offences; I am very sorry that my indiscreet questions gave miss Delacour any pain—my head was so full of the mammoth, that I blundered on without seeing what I was about, till it was too late."

"Pray, sir," said Mrs. Margaret Delacour, who now returned, and took her seat upon a sofa, with the solemnity of a person who was going to sit in judgment upon a criminal—"pray sir, may I ask how long you have been acquainted with my lady Delacour?"

Clarence Hervey took up a book, and

with great gravity kissed it, as if he had been upon his oath in a court of justice, and answered,

"To the best of my recollection, madam, it is now four years since I had first the pleasure and honour of seeing lady Delacour."

"And in that time, intimately as you have had the pleasure of being acquainted with her ladyship, you have never discovered that she had a daughter?"

"Never," said Mr. Hervey.

"There, lady Anne!—There!" cried Mrs. Delacour, "will you tell me after this, that lady Delacour is not a monster."

"Every body says, that she's a prodigy," said lady Anne, "and prodigies and monsters are sometimes thought synonymous terms."

"Such a mother was never heard of," continued Mrs. Delacour, "since the days of Savage and lady Macclesfield.—I am convinced that she *hates* her daughter.—Why she never speaks of her—she never sees her—she never thinks of her!"

"Some mothers speak more than they think of their children, and others think more than they speak of them," said lady Anne.

"I always thuoght," said Mr. Hervey, "that lady Delacour was a woman of great sensbility."

"Sensibility!" exclaimed the indignant old lady—"She has no sensibility, sir—none—none.—She who lives in a constant round of dissipation; who performs no one duty; who exists only for herself; how does she show her sensibility?—Has she sensibility for her husband—for her daughter—for any one useful purpose upon earth?—O, how I hate the cambrick-handkerchief sensibility, that is brought out only to weep at a tragedy!—Yes; lady Delacour has sensibility enough, I grant ye, when sensibility is the fashion.—I remember well her performing the part of a nurse with vast applause; and I remember, too, the *sensibility* she showed, when the child that she nursed

fell a sacrifice to her dissipation.—The second of her children, that she killed—"

"Killed!—O, surely my dear Mrs. Delacour, that is too strong a word," said lady Anne—"You would not make a Medea of lady Delacour."

"It would have been better if I had," cried Mrs. Delacour—"I can understand that there may be such a thing in nature as a jealous wife, but an unfeeling mother I cannot comprehend—That passes my powers of imagination."

"And mine, so much," said lady Anne, "that I cannot believe such a being to exist in the world—notwithstanding all the descriptions I have heard of it, as you say, my dear Mrs. Delacour, it passes my powers of imagination.—Let us leave it in Mr. Hervey's apocryphal chapter of animals, and he will excuse us if I never admit it into true history—at least without some better evidence than I have yet heard."

"Why, my dear, dear lady Anne,"

cried Mrs. Delacour—" bless me, I've made this coffee so sweet, there's no drinking it—what evidence would you have?"

" None, said lady Anne, smiling, " I would have none."

" That is to say, you will take none," said Mrs. Delacour, " but can any thing be stronger evidence than her ladyship's conduct to *my* poor Helena—to *your* Helena I should say—for you have educated, you have protected her, you have been a mother to her.—I am an infirm, weak, ignorant, passionate old woman—I could not have been what you have been to that child—God will bless you!—God will bless you!"

She rose as she spoke, to set down her coffee-cup on the table. Clarence Hervey took it from her with a look which said much, and which she was perfectly capable of understanding.

"Young man," said she, "it is very unfashionable to treat age and infirmity with politeness.—I wish that your friend, lady

Delacour, may at my time of life meet with as much respect, as she has met with admiration and gallantry in her youth.—Poor woman, her head has absolutely been turned with admiration—and if fame say true, Mr. Clarence Hervey has had his share in turning that head by his flattery."

"I am sure her ladyship has turned mine by her charms," said Clarence, "and I certainly am not to be blamed for admiring what all the world admires."

"I wish," said the old lady, "for her own sake, for the sake of her family, and for the sake of her reputation, that my lady Delacour had fewer admirers, and more friends."

"Women, who have met with so many admirers, seldom meet with many friends," said lady Anne.

"No," said Mrs. Delacour, "for they seldom are wise enough to know their value."

"We learn the value of all things, but especially of friends, by experience", said lady Anne, "and it is no wonder, there-

fore, that those who have little experience of the pleasures of friendship should not be wise enough to know their value."

"This is very good natured sophistry—but lady Delacour is too vain ever to have a friend," said Mrs. Delacour.—"My dear lady Anne, you don't know her as well as I do—she has more vanity than ever woman had."

"That is certainly saying a great deal," said lady Anne, "but then we must consider, that lady Delacour, as an heiress, a beauty, and a wit, has a right to a triple share of vanity at least."

"Both her fortune and her beauty are gone; and if she have any wit left, it is time it should teach her how to conduct herself, I think," said Mrs. Delacour, "but I give her up—I give her up."

"O, no," said lady Anne, "you must not give her up yet.—I have been informed, and upon *the best authority*, that lady Delacour was not always the unfeeling dissipated fine lady that she now ap-

pears to be.—This is only one of the transformations of fashion—the period of her enchantment will soon be at an end, and she will return to her natural character.—I should not be at all surprised, if lady Delacour were to appear at once, '*la femme comme il y en a peu.*"

"Or '*la bonne mère?*'" said Mrs. Delacour, sarcastically, "after leaving her daughter."

"*Pour bonne bouche*," interrupted lady Anne, "when she is tired of the insipid taste of other pleasures, she will have a higher relish for those of domestic life, which will be new and fresh to her."

"And so you really think, my dear lady Anne, that my lady Delacour will end by being a domestic woman.—Well," said Mrs. Margaret, after taking two pinches of snuff, "some people believe in the millennium—but I confess I am not one of them—are you, Mr. Hervey?"

"If it were foretold to me by a good angel," said Clarence, smiling, as his

eye glanced at lady Anne—"If it were foretold to me by a good angel, how could I doubt it?"

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of one of lady Anne's little boys, who came running eagerly up to his mother, to ask whether he might have "the sulphurs to show to Helena Delacour.—I want to show her Vertumnus and Pomona, mamma," said he.—"Were not the cherries that the old gardener sent, very good?"

"What is this about the cherries and the old gardener, Charles?" said the young lady who sat beside lady Anne: "come here and tell me the whole story."

"I will, but I should tell it to you a great deal better another time," said the boy, "because now Helena's waiting for Vertumnus and Pomona."

"Go your ways then to Helena," said lady Anne, and I will tell the story for you."

Then turning to the young lady she began—"Once upon a time there lived

an old gardener at Kensington; and this old gardener had an aloe, which was older than himself; for it was very near a hundred years of age, and it was just going to blossom, and the old gardener calculated how much he might make by showing his aloe, when it should be in full blow, to the generous public—and he calculated that he might make a hundred pounds; and with this hundred pounds he determined to do more than ever was done with a hundred pounds before; but, unluckily, as he was thus reckoning his blossoms before they were blown, he chanced to meet with a fair damsel, who ruined all his calculations."

"Ay, Mrs. Stanhope's maid, was not it?" interrupted Mrs. Margaret Delacour. "A pretty damsel she was, and almost as good a politician as her mistress.—Think of that jilt's tricking this poor old fellow out of his aloe—and—O, the meanness of lady Delacour, to accept of that aloe for one of her extravagant entertainments!"

"But I always understood that she paid fifty guineas for it," said lady Anne.

"Whether she did or not," said Mrs. Delacour, "her ladyship and Mrs. Stanhope between them were the ruin of this poor old man.—He was taken in to marry that jade of a waiting maid; she turned out just as you might expect from a pupil of Mrs. Stanhope's—the match-making Mrs. Stanhope — you know, sir." (Clarence Hervey changed colour.)—"She turned out," continued Mrs. Delacour, "every thing that was bad—ruined her husband—ran away from him — and left him a beggar."

"Poor man!" said Clarence Hervey.

"But now," said lady Anne, "let's come to the best part of the story—mark how good comes out of evil.—If this poor man had not lost his aloe and his wife, I probably should never have been acquainted with Mrs. Delacour, or with my little Helena.—About the time that the old gardener was left a beggar, as I happened to be walking one fine evening

in Sloane-street, I met a procession of school girls—an old man begged from them in a most moving voice; and as they passed, several of the young ladies threw halfpence to him.—One little girl, who observed that the old man could not stoop without great difficulty, staid behind the rest of her companions, and collected the halfpence which they had thrown to the old man, and put them into his hat.—He began to tell his story over again to her, and she stayed so long listening to it, that her companions had turned the corner of the street, and were out of sight.—She looked about in great distress; and I never shall forget the pathetic voice with which she said, 'O, what will become of me? every body will be angry with me!'—I assured her that nobody should be angry with her, and she gave me her little hand with the most innocent confidence.—I took her home to her schoolmistress, and I was so pleased with the beginning of this acquaintance, that I was determined to cultivate it.—One good acquaintance I

have heard always leads to another.—Helena introduced me to her aunt Delacour, as her best friend.—Mrs. Margaret Delacour has had the goodness to let her little niece spend the holidays, and all her leisure time with me, so that our acquaintance has grown into friendship.—Helena has become quite one of my family."

"And I am sure she has become quite a different creature, since she has been so much with you," cried Mrs. Delacour, "her spirits were quite broken by her mother's neglect of her—young as she is, she has a great deal of real sensibility—but as to her mother's sensibility——."

At the recollection of lady Delacour's neglect of her child, Mrs. Delacour was going again to launch forth into indignant invective, but lady Anne stopped her, by whispering——

"Take care what you say of the mother, for here is the daughter coming, and she has, indeed, a great deal of real sensibility."

Helena and her young companions now

came into the room, bringing with them the sulphurs at which they had been looking.

"Mamma," said little Charles Percival, "we have brought the sulphurs to you, because there are some of them that *I* don't know."

"Wonderful!" said lady Anne, "and what is not quite so wonderful, there are some of them that *I* don't know."

The children spread the sulphurs upon a little table, and all the company gathered round it.

"Here are all the nine muses for you!" said the least of the boys, who had taken his seat by Clarence Hervey at dinner—"Here are all the muses for you, Mr. Hervey; which do you like best?—O, that's the tragic muse that you have chosen!—You don't like the tragic better than the comic muse, do you?"

Clarence Hervey made no answer, for he was at that instant recollecting how Belinda looked in the character of the tragic muse.

"Has your ladyship ever happened to meet with the young lady, who has spent this winter with lady Delacour?" said Clarence to lady Anne.

"I sat near her one night at the opera," said lady Anne, "she has a charming countenance."

"Who!—Belinda Portman do you mean?" said Mrs. Delacour—"I am sure if I were a young man, I would not trust to the charming countenance of a young lady, who is a pupil of Mrs. Stanhope's, and a friend of —— Helena, my dear, shut the door—the most dissipated woman in London."

"Indeed," said lady Anne, "miss Portman is in a dangerous situation—but some young people learn prudence by being placed in dangerous situations, as some young horses, as I have heard Mr. Percival say, learn to be sure footed, by being left to pick their own way on bad roads."

Here Mr. Percival, Dr. X——, and some other gentlemen, came up stairs to tea, and the conversation took another

turn.—Clarence Hervey endeavoured to take his share in it with his usual vivacity, but he was thinking of Belinda Portman, dangerous situations, stumbling horses, &c. and he made several blunders, which showed his absence of mind.

"What have you there, Mr. Hervey?" said Dr. X——, looking over his shoulder—"The tragic muse?—this tragic muse seems to rival lady Delacour in your admiration."

"O," said Clarence, smiling, "you know I was always a votary of the muses."

"And a favoured votary," said Dr. X——. "I wish for the interests of literature, that poets may always be lovers, though I cannot say that I desire lovers should always be poets.—But Mr. Hervey, you must never marry, remember," continued Dr. X——, "never—for your true poet must always be miserable.—You know, Petrarch tells us, he would not have been happy if he could; he would not have married his mistress if it

had been in his power; because, then there would have been an end of his beautiful sonnets."

"Every one to his taste," said Clarence; "for my part, I have even less ambition to imitate the heroism, than hope of being inspired with the poetic genius of Petrarch.—I have no wish to pass whole nights composing sonnets.—I would (am not I right, Mr. Percival?) infinitely rather be a slave of the ring, than a slave of the lamp."

Here the conversation ended—Clarence took his leave, and Mrs. Margaret Delacour said, the moment he had left the room—

"Quite a different sort of young man from what I expected to see!"

CHAPTER IX.

ADVICE.

THE next morning Mr. Hervey called on Dr. X——, and begged that he would accompany him to lady Delacour's.

"To be introduced to your tragic muse?" said the doctor.

"Yes," said Hervey, "I must have your opinion of her before I devote myself."

"My opinion! but of whom?—Of lady Delacour?"

"No; but of a young lady whom you will see with her."

"Is she handsome?"

"Beautiful!"

"And young?"

"And young."

"And graceful?"

"The most graceful person you ever beheld."

"Young, beautiful, graceful; then the deuce take me," said Dr. X——, "if I give you my opinion of her; for the odds are, that she has a thousand faults, at least, to balance these perfections."

"A thousand faults! a charitable allowance," said Clarence, smiling.

"There now," said Dr. X——

'Touch him, and no minister's so sore.'

To punish you for wincing at my first setting out, I promise you, that if the lady have a million of faults, each of them as high as huge Olympus, I will see them with the eye of a flatterer—not of a friend."

"I defy you to be so good, or so bad as your word, Doctor," said Hervey.—"You have too much wit to make a good flatterer."

"And perhaps you think too much to make a good friend," said Dr. X——.

"Not so," said Clarence, "I would at any time rather be cut by a sharp knife than by a blunt one.—But, my dear doctor, I hope you will not be prejudiced against Belinda, merely because she is with lady Delacour; for, to my certain knowledge, she is not under her ladyship's influence.—She judges and acts for herself, of which I have had an instance."

"Very possibly!" interrupted Dr. X——, "but before we go any further, will you please to tell me of what Belinda you are talking?"

"Belinda Portman.—I forgot that I had not told you."

"Miss Portman, a niece of Mrs. Stanhope's?"

"Yes, but do not be prejudiced against her on that account," said Clarence, eagerly, "though I was at first myself."

"Then you will excuse my following your example instead of your precepts."

"No, said Clarence, for my precepts are far better than my example."

Lady Delacour received Dr. X—— most courteously, and thanked Mr. Hervey for introducing to her a gentleman with whom she had long desired to converse.—Dr. X—— had a great literary reputation, and she saw that he was a perfectly well-bred man; consequently she was ambitious of winning his admiration.—She perceived also, that he had considerable influence with Clarence Hervey, and this was a sufficient reason to make her wish for his good opinion.—Belinda was particularly pleased with his manners and conversation; she saw that he paid her much attention, and she was desirous that he should think favourably of her; but she had the good sense and good taste to avoid a display of her abilities and accomplishments.—A sensible man, who has any knowledge of the world, and talents for conversation, can easily draw out the knowledge of those with whom he converses.—Dr. X—— possessed this power in a superiour degree.

"Well," cried Clarence, when their visit was over, "what is your opinion of lady Delacour?"

"I am 'blasted with excess of light,'" said the doctor.

"Her ladyship is certainly very brilliant," said Clarence, "but I hope that miss Portman did not overpower you."

"No—I turned my eyes from lady Delacour upon miss Portman, as a painter turns his eyes upon mild green, to rest them, when they have been dazzled by glaring colours.

'She yields her charms of mind with sweet delay.'"

"I was afraid," said Hervey, "that you might think her manners too reserved and cold—they are certainly become more so than they used to be.—But so much the better; by and by we shall find beautiful flowers spring up from beneath the snow."

"A very poetical hope," said Dr. X——; "but in judging of the human character, we must not entirely trust to

analogies and allusions taken from the vegetable creation."

"What!" cried Clarence Hervey, looking eagerly in the doctor's eyes—"What do you mean?—I am afraid you do not approve of Belinda."

"Your fears are almost as precipitate as your hopes, my good sir—but to put you out of pain, I will tell you, that I approve of all I have seen of this young lady, but that it is absolutely out of my power, to form a decisive judgment of a woman's temper and character in the course of a single morning visit.—Women, you know, as well as men, often speak with one species of enthusiasm, and act with another.—I must see your Belinda act—I must study her, before I can give you my final judgment.—Lady Delacour has honoured me with her commands to go to her as often as possible.—For your sake, my dear Hervey, I shall obey her ladyship most punctually, that I may have frequent opportunities of seeing your miss Portman."

Clarence expressed his gratitude with much energy, for this instance of the doctor's friendship.—Belinda, who had been entertained by Dr. X——'s conversation during this first visit, was more and more delighted with his company, as she became more acquainted with his understanding and character. She felt that he unfolded her powers, and that with the greatest politeness and address he raised her confidence in herself, without ever descending to flattery.—By degrees, she learned to look upon him as her friend; she imparted to him with great ingenuousness her opinions on various subjects, and she was both amused and instructed by his observations on the characters and manners of the company who frequented lady Delacour's assemblies.—She did not judge of the doctor's sincerity merely by the kindness he showed her, but by his conduct toward others.

One night, at a select party at lady Delacour's, a Spanish gentleman was amusing the company with some anec-

dotes, to prove the extraordinary passion which some of his countrymen formerly showed for the game of chess.—He mentioned families, in which unfinished games, bequeathed by will, had descended from father to son, and where victory was doubtful for upwards of a century.

Mr. Hervey observed, that gaining a battle was, at that time, so common to the court of Spain, that a victory at chess seemed to confer more eclat; for that an abbè, by losing adroitly a game at chess to the Spanish minister, obtained a cardinal's hat.

The foreigner was flattered by the manner in which Hervey introduced this slight circumstance, and he directed to him his conversation, speaking in French and Italian successively; he was sufficiently skilled in both languages, but Clarence spoke them better. Till he appeared, the foreigner was the principal object of attention, but he was soon eclipsed by Mr. Hervey.—Nothing amusing or in-

structive that could be said upon the game of chess escaped him, and the literary ground, which the slow don would have taken some hours to go regularly over, our hero traversed in a few minutes.—From Twiss to Vida, from Irwin to sir William Jones, from Spain to India, he passed with admirable celerity, and seized all that could adorn his course from Indian antiquities or Asiatic researches.

By this display of knowledge he surprised even his friend Dr. X——. The ladies admired his taste as a poet, the gentlemen his accuracy as a critic; lady Delacour loudly applauded, and Belinda silently approved.—Clarence was elated.—The Spanish gentleman, to whom he had just quoted a case in point from Vida's Scacchia, asked him if he were as perfect in the practice as in the theory of the game of chess.—Clarence was too proud of excelling in every thing to decline the Spaniard's challenge.—They sat down to chess.—Lady Delacour, as they ranged the pieces on the board, cried—

"Whoever wins shall be my knight; and this silver chess-man shall be his prize.—Was it not queen Elizabeth, who gave a silver chess-man to one of her courtiers as a mark of her royal favour?—I am ashamed to imitate such a pedantic coquet—but since I have said it, how can I retract!"

"Impossible, impossible!" cried Clarence Hervey—"This silver chess-man be our prize; and if I win it, like the gallant Raleigh I'll wear it in my cap, and what proud Essex shall dare to challenge it!"

The combat now began—the spectators were silent.—Clarence made an errour in his first move, for his attention was distracted by seeing Belinda behind his adversary's chair.—The Spaniard was deceived by this mistake into a contemptuous opinion of his opponent—Belinda changed her place—Clarence recovered his presence of mind, and convinced him that he was not a man to be despised. The combat was long doubtful, but at

length, to the surprise of all present, Clarence Hervey was victorious.

Exulting in his success he looked round for lady Delacour, from whom he expected the honours of his triumph.—She had left the room, but soon she returned, dressed in the character of queen Elizabeth, in which she had once appeared at a masquerade, with a large ruff, and all the costume of the times.

Clarence Hervey, throwing himself at her feet, addressed her in that high flown style, which her majesty was wont to hear from the gallant Raleigh, or the accomplished Essex.

Soon the coquetry of the queen entirely conquered her prudery; and the favoured courtier, evidently elated by his situation, was as enthusiastic as her majesty's most insatiable vanity could desire.—The characters were well supported; both the actor and actress were highly animated, and seemed so fully possessed by their parts, as to be insensible to the comments

that were made upon the scene.—Clarence Hervey was first recalled to himself by the deep blush which he saw on Belinda's cheek, when queen Elizabeth addressed her as one of her maids of honour, of whom she affected to be jealous.—He was conscious that he had been hurried by the enthusiasm of the moment farther than he either wished or intended. It was difficult to recede, when her majesty seemed disposed to advance; but sir Walter Raleigh, with much presence of mind, turned to the foreigner, whom he accosted as the Spanish ambassador.

"Your Excellency sees," said he "how this great queen turns the heads of her faithful subjects, and afterward has the art of paying them with nothing but words.—Has the new world afforded you any coin half so valuable?"

The Spanish ambassador's grave replies to this playful question gave a new turn to the conversation, and relieved Clarence Hervey from his embarrassment. Lady

Delacour, though still in high spirits, was easily diverted to other objects. She took the ambassador with her to the next room, to show him a picture of Mary, queen of Scots. The company followed her —Clarence Hervey remained with Dr. X—— and Belinda, who had just asked the doctor to teach her the moves at chess.

"Lady Delacour has charming spirits," said Clarence Hervey, "they inspire every body with gayety."

"Every body! they incline me more to melancholy than mirth," said Dr. X——. "These high spirits do not seem quite natural. The vivacity of youth and of health, miss Portman, always charms me; but this gayety of lady Delacour's does not appear to me that of a sound mind in a sound body."

The doctor's penetration went so near the truth, that Belinda, afraid of betraying her friend's secret, never raised her eyes from the chess-board whilst he spoke;

but went on setting up the fallen castles, and bishops, and kings, with expeditious diligence.

"You are putting the bishop into the place of the knight," said Clarence.

"Lady Delacour," continued the doctor, "seems to be in a perpetual fever, either of mind or body—I cannot tell which—and as a professional man, I really have some curiosity to determine the question. If I could feel her pulse, I could instantly decide; but I have heard her say, that she has a horrour against having her pulse felt—and a lady's horrour is invincible—by reason——"

"But not by address," said Clarence, "I can tell you a method of counting her pulse, without her knowing it—without her seeing you—without your seeing her."

"Indeed!" said Dr. X——, smiling, "that may be a useful secret in my profession; pray impart it to me—you who excel in every thing."

"Are you in earnest, Mr. Hervey?" said Belinda.

"Perfectly in earnest—my secret is quite simple.—Look through the door at the shadow of queen Elizabeth's ruff—observe how it vibrates; the motion as well as the figure is magnified in the shadow.—Cannot you count every pulsation distinctly?"

"I can," said Dr. X——, "and I give you credit for making an ingenious use of a trifling observation."—The doctor paused, and looked round. "Those people cannot hear what we are saying, I believe?"

"O, no," said Belinda, "they are intent upon themselves."

Doctor X—— fixed his eyes mildly upon Clarence Hervey, and exclaimed in an earnest friendly tone—"What a pity Mr. Hervey, that a young man of your talents and acquirements, a man who might be any thing, should—pardon the expression—choose to be—nothing—

should waste upon petty objects powers suited to the greatest—should lend his soul to every contest for frivolous superiority, when the same energy concentrated, might ensure honourable preeminence among the first men in his country. —Shall he, who might not only distinguish himself in any science or situation, who might not only acquire personal fame, but, O, far more noble motive!—who might be permanently useful to his fellow creatures, content himself with being the evanescent amusement of a drawing-room?—Shall one, who might be great in public, or happy in private life, waste in this deplorable manner the best years of his existence—time that never can be recalled?" —"This is declamation!"—"No: it is truth put into the strongest language that I have power to use, in the hope of making some impression: I speak from my heart, for I have a sincere regard for you, Mr. Hervey, and if I have been impertinent, you must forgive me."

"Forgive you!" cried Clarence Her-

vey, taking Dr. X—— by the hand, I think you a real friend—you shall have the best thanks, not in words, but in actions—you have roused my ambition, and I will pursue noble ends by noble means. —A few years have been sacrificed—but the lessons that they have taught me remain.—I cannot, presumptuous as I am, flatter myself that my exertions can be of any material utility to my fellow-creatures, but what I can do I will.—My excellent friend! If I be hereafter either successful in public, or happy in private life, it is to you I shall owe it."

Belinda was touched by the candour and good sense with which Clarence Hervey spoke.—His character appeared in a new light—she was proud of her own judgment, in having discerned his merit, and for a moment she permitted herself to feel "unreproved pleasure in his company."

The next morning, sir Philip Baddely and Mr. Rochfort called at lady Delacour's —Mr. Hervey was present—Her ladyship

was summoned to Mrs. Franks, and Belinda was left with these gentlemen.

"Why, damme, Clary! you have been a lost man," cried sir Philip, "ever since you were drowned—Damme, why did not you come to dine with us that day, now I recollect it?—We were all famously merry—but for your comfort, Clarence, we missed you cursedly, and were damned sorry you ever took that damned unlucky jump into the Serpentine river—damned sorry—were not we Rochfort?"

"O," said Clarence, in an ironical tone, "you need no vouchers to convince me of the reality of your sorrow.—You know I can never forget your jumping so courageously into the river, to save the life of your friend."

"O, pooh! damn it," said sir Philip, "what signifies who pulled you out, now you are safe and sound? By the by, Clary, did you ever quiz that doctor, as I desired you?—No, that I'm sure you didn't; but I think he has made a quiz of you; for damme, I believe you have taken such

a fancy to the old quizical fellow, that you can't live without him.—Miss Portman, don't you admire Hervey's taste?"

"In this instance I certainly do admire Mr. Hervey's taste," said Belinda, "for the best of all possible reasons, because it entirely agrees with my own."

"Very extraordinary, faith," said sir Philip.

"And what the devil can you find to like in him, Clary?" continued Mr. Rochfort, "for one wouldn't be so rude to put that question to a lady.—Ladies you know are never to be questioned about their likings and dislikings.—Some have pet dogs, some have pet cats; then why not a *pet quiz*."

"Ha! ha! ha! that's a good one, Rochfort—a pet quiz—Ha! ha! ha! Dr. X—— shall be miss Portman's pet quiz.—Put it about—put it about, Rochfort," continued the witty baronet, and he and his facetious companion continued to laugh as long as they possibly could, at this happy hit."

Belinda, without being in the least discomposed by their insolent folly, as soon as they had finished laughing, very coolly observed, that she could have no objection to give her reasons for preferring Dr. X——'s company, but for fear they might give offence to sir Philip and his friends. She then defended the doctor with so much firmness, and yet with so much propriety, that Clarence Hervey was absolutely enchanted with her, and with his own penetration in having discovered her real character, notwithstanding she was Mrs. Stanhope's niece.

"I never argue, for my part," cried Mr. Rochfort, "'pon honour 'tis a deal too much trouble.—A lady, a handsome lady I mean, is always in the right with me."

"But as to you, Hervey," said sir Philip, "damme, do you know, my boy, that our club has come to a determination to black ball you, if you keep company with this famous doctor?"

"Your club, sir Philip, will do me honour by such an ostracism."

"Ostracism!" repeated sir Philip—"In plain English, does that mean that you choose to be black-balled by us? Why damn it, Clary, you'll be nobody—But follow your own genius—damn me if I take it upon me to understand your men of genius—they are in the Serpentine river one day,—and in the clouds the next—so fare ye well, Clary.—I expect to see you a doctor of physic, or a methodist parson soon, damn me if I don't—so fare ye well, Clary—Is black-ball your last word? or will you think better on't, and give up the doctor?"

"I can never give up Dr. X——'s friendship—I would sooner be black-balled by every club in London.—The good lesson you gave me, sir Philip, the day I was fool enough to jump into the Serpentine river, has made me wiser for life.—I know, for I have felt, the difference between real friends and fashionable ac-

quaintance.—Give up Dr. X——! Never! never!"

"Then fare ye well, Clary," said sir Philip, "you're no longer one of us."

"Then, fare ye well, Clary, you're no longer the man for me," said Rochfort."

"*Tant pis* and *tant mieux*," said Clarence," and so they parted.

As they left the room, Clarence Hervey involuntarily turned to Belinda, and he thought that he read in her ingenuous, animated countenance, full approbation of his conduct.

"Hist! are they gone? Quite gone?" said lady Delacour, entering the room from an adjoining apartment, "they have staid an unconscionable time—how much I am obliged to Mrs. Franks for detaining me! I have escaped their vapid impertinence; and in truth, this morning, I have such a multiplicity of business, that I have scarcely a moment even for wit and Clarence Hervey.—Belinda, my dear, will you have the charity to look over some

of these letters for me, which, as Marriott tells me, have been lying in my writing table this week—expecting most unreasonably, that I should have the grace to open them.—We are always punished for our indolence—as your friend Dr. X—— said the other day—if we suffer business to accumulate, it drifts with every ill wind like snow, till at last an avalanche of it comes down at once, and quite overwhelms us.—Excuse me, Clarence," continued her ladyship, as she opened her letters—" This is very rude—but I know I have secured my pardon from you by remembering your friend's wit—wisdom, I should say—How seldom are wit and wisdom joined!—They might have been joined in lady Delacour, perhaps—there's vanity!—if she had early met with such a friend as Dr. X——, but its too late now," said she, with a deep sigh.

Clarence Hervey heard it, and it made a great impression upon his benevolent imagination.—" Why too late?" said he

to himself—"Mrs. Margaret Delacour is mistaken, if she think this woman wants sensibility."

"What have you there, miss Portman?" said lady Delacour, taking from Belinda's hand one of the letters which she had begged her to look over—"Something wondrous pathetic, I should guess, by your countenance.—'*Helena Delacour.*'—O, read it to yourself, my dear—a school-girl's letter is a thing I abominate—I make it a rule never to read Helena's epistles."

"Let me prevail upon your ladyship to make an exception to the general rule then," said Belinda; "I can assure you this is not a common school-girl's letter: miss Delacour seems to inherit her mother's '*éloquence de billet.*'"

"Miss Portman seems to possess, by inheritance, by instinct, by magic, or otherwise, powers of persuasion, which no one can resist.—There's compliment for compliment, my dear.—Is there any thing half so well turned in Helena's let-

ter?—Really 'tis vastly well," continued her ladyship, as she read the letter—"where did the little gipsy learn to write so charmingly?—I protest I should like of all things to have her at home with me this summer—the 21st of June—well, after the birthday, I shall have time to think about it.—But then, we shall be going out of town, and at Harrowgate I should not know what to do with her—she had better, much better go to her humdrum aunt Margaret's, as she always does—she is a fixture in Grosvenor square—these stationary good people—these zoophite friends are sometimes very convenient—and Mrs. Margaret Delacour is the most unexceptionable zoophite in the creation.—She has, it is true, an antipathy to me, because I'm of such a different nature from herself; but then her antipathy does not extend to my offspring—she is kind, beyond measure, to Helena, on purpose, I believe, to provoke me. Now I provoke her in my turn, by never being provoked—and she saves me a vast deal of

trouble, for which she is overpaid by the pleasure of abusing me.—This is the way of the world, Clarence.—Don't look so serious—you are not come yet to daughters and sons, and schools, and holidays, and all the evils of domestic life."

"Evils!" repeated Clarence Hervey, in a tone which surprised her ladyship. She looked immediately with a significant smile at Belinda.—"Why do not you echo *evils*, miss Portman?"

"Pray, lady Delacour," interrupted Clarence Hervey, "when do you go to Harrowgate?"

"What a sudden transition!" said lady Delacour—What association of ideas could just at that instant take you to Harrowgate?"

"When do I go to Harrowgate? Immediately after the birthday, I believe we shall —I advise you to be of the party."

"Your ladyship does me a great deal of honour," said Hervey: "I shall, if it be possible, do myself the pleasure of attending you."

And soon after this arrangement was made, Mr. Hervey took his leave.

"Well, my dear, are you still poring over that letter of Helena's?" said lady Delacour to miss Portman.

"I fancy your ladyship did not quite finish it," said Belinda.

"No; I saw something about the Leverian Museum, and a swallow's nest in a pair of garden shears; and I was afraid I was to have a catalogue of curiosities, for which I have little taste, and less time."

"You did not see, then, what miss Delacour says of the lady who took her to that Museum?"

"Not I—What lady? her aunt Margaret?"

"No; Mrs. Margaret Delacour, she says, has been so ill for some time past, that she goes no where, but to lady Anne Percival's."

"Poor woman," said lady Delacour, "she will die soon, and then I shall have Helena upon my hands, unless some other

kind friend takes a fancy to her.—Who is this lady that has carried her to the Leverian Museum?"

"Lady Anne Percival; of whom she speaks with so much gratitude and affection, that I quite long——"

"Lord bless me!" interrupted lady Delacour, "lady Anne Percival! Helena has mentioned this lady Anne Percival to me before, I recollect, in some of her letters."

"Then you did read some of her letters?"

"Half!—I never read more than half, upon my word," said lady Delacour, laughing.

"Why will you delight in making yourself appear worse than you are, my dear lady Delacour?" said Belinda, taking her hand.

"Because I hate to be like other people," said her ladyship, "who delight in making themselves appear better than what they are—but I was going to tell you, that I do believe I did provoke Per-

cival by marrying lord Delacour.—I cannot tell you how much this idea delights me—I am sure that the man has a lively remembrance of me, or else he would never make his wife take so much notice of my daughter."

"Surely your ladyship does not think," said Belinda, "that a wife is a being whose actions are necessarily governed by a husband."

"Not necessarily—but accidentally.—When a lady accidentally sets up for being a good wife, she must of course love, honour, and obey. Now, you understand, I am not in the least obliged to lady Anne for her kindness to Helena; because it all goes under the head obedience, in my imagination—and her ladyship is paid for it by an accession of character—she has the reward of having it said—'O, lady Anne Percival is the best wife in the world'—'O, lady Anne Percival is quite a pattern woman!'—I hate pattern women,—I hope I may never see lady Anne, for I'm sure I should detest her beyond all

things living—Mrs. Luttridge not excepted."

Belinda was surprised, and shocked at the malignant vehemence with which her ladyship uttered those words; it was in vain, however, that she remonstrated on the injustice of predetermining to detest lady Anne; merely because she had shown kindness to Helena, and because she bore a high character.—Lady Delacour was a woman who never listened to reason; or who listened to it only that she might parry it by wit. Upon this occasion, her wit had not its usual effect upon miss Portman; instead of entertaining, it disgusted her.

"You have called me your friend, lady Delacour," said she: "I should but ill deserve that name, if I had not the courage to speak the truth to you—if I had not the courage to tell you when I think you are wrong."

"But I have not the courage to hear you, my dear," said lady Delacour, stopping her ears.—"So your conscience may

be at ease; you may suppose that you have said every thing that is wise, and good, and proper, and sublime, and that you deserve to be called the best of friends—you shall enjoy the office of censor to lady Delacour, and welcome; but remember, it is a sinecure place, though I will pay you with my love and esteem to any extent you please.—You sigh—for my folly.—Alas, my dear, 'tis hardly worth while—my follies will soon be at an end.—Of what use could even the wisdom of Solomon be to me now?—If you have any humanity, you will not force me to reflect—whilst I yet live I must *keep it up* with incessant dissipation—the tetotum keeps upright only while it spins—so let us talk of the birthnight, or the new play that we are to see to night, or the ridiculous figure lady H—— made at the concert; or let us talk of Harrowgate, or what you will."

Pity succeeded to disgust and displeasure in Belinda's mind, and she could hardly refrain from tears, whilst she saw

this unhappy creature, with forced smiles, endeavour to hide the real anguish of her soul—she could only say—

"But, my dear lady Delacour, do not you think that your little Helena, who seems to have a most affectionate disposition, would add to your happiness at home?"

"Her affectionate disposition can be nothing to me," said lady Delacour.

Belinda felt a hot tear drop upon her hand, which lay upon lady Delacour's lap.—"Can you wonder," continued her ladyship, hastily wiping away the tear which she had let fall; "can you wonder that I should talk of detesting lady Anne Percival?—You see she has robbed me of the affections of my child.—Helena asks to come home—yes—but how does she ask it? coldly; formally; as a duty—but look at the end of her letter—I have read it all—every bitter word of it I have tasted.—How differently she writes—look even at the flowing hand—the moment

she begins to speak of lady Anne Percival—then her soul breaks out—'lady Anne has offered to take her to Oakly-park—she should be extremely happy to go, if I please.'—Yes—let her go—let her go as far from me as possible—let her never, never, see her wretched mother more.—Write," said lady Delacour, turning hastily to Belinda, "write in my name, and tell her to go to Oakly-park, and to be happy."

"But why should you take it for granted that she cannot be happy with you?" said Belinda. "Let us see her—let us try the experiment."

"No," said lady Delacour; "no—it is too late—I will never condescend in my last moments to beg for that affection, to which it may be thought I have forfeited my natural claim."

Pride, anger, and sorrow, struggled in her countenance as she spoke.—She turned her face from Belinda, and walked out of the room with dignity.

Nothing remains for me to do, thought Belinda, but to sooth this haughty spirit —all other hope I see is vain.

At this moment Clarence Hervey, who had no suspicion that the gay, brilliant lady Delacour was sinking into the grave, had formed a design worthy of his ardent and benevolent character. —The manner in which her ladyship had spoken of his friend Dr. X——, the sigh which she gave at the reflection, that she might have been a very different character, if she had early had a sensible friend, made a great impression upon Mr. Hervey. Till then, he had merely considered her ladyship as an object of amusement, and an introduction to high life; but he now felt so much interested for her, that he determined to exert all his influence to promote her happiness. —He knew *that* influence to be considerable — not that he was either coxcomb, or dupe enough, to imagine that lady Delacour was in love with him; he was perfectly sensible that her only wish was to obtain his admiration,

and he resolved to show her, that it could no longer be secured without deserving his esteem.—Clarence Hervey was a thoroughly generous young man: capable of making the greatest sacrifices, when encouraged by the hope of doing good, he determined to postpone the declaration of his attachment to Belinda, that he might devote himself entirely to his new project. His plan was to wean lady Delacour, by degrees, from dissipation, by attaching her to her daughter, and to lady Anne Percival. He was sanguine in all his hopes, and rapid, but not unthinking, in all his decisions.—From lady Delacour he went immediately to Dr. X——, to whom he communicated his designs.

"I applaud your benevolent intentions," said the doctor, "but have you really the presumption to hope, that an ingenuous young man of eight and twenty can reform a veteran coquet of eight and thirty?"

"Lady Delacour is not yet six and thirty," said Clarence; "but the older

she is, the better the chance of her giving up a losing game.—She has an admirable understanding, and she will soon —I mean as soon as she is acquainted with lady Anne Percival—discover that she has mistaken the road to happiness. —All the difficulty will be to make them fairly acquainted with each other—for this, my dear doctor, I must trust to you.—Do you prepare lady Anne to tolerate lady Delacour's faults, and I will prepare lady Delacour to tolerate lady Anne's virtues."

"You have generously taken the more difficult task of the two," replied Dr. X——. "Well, we shall see what can be done.—After the birthday, lady Delacour talks of going to Harrowgate—you know, Oakly-park is not far from Harrowgate, so they will have frequent opportunities of meeting. But, take my word for it, nothing can be done till after the birthday; for lady Delacour's head is at present full of crape petticoats, and horses, and carriages,

and a certain Mrs. Luttridge, whom she hates with a hatred passing that of women."

CHAPTER X.

THE MYSTERIOUS BOUDOIR.

ACCUSTOMED to study human nature, Dr. X—— had acquired peculiar sagacity in judging of character. Notwithstanding the address, with which lady Delacour concealed the real motives for her apparently thoughtless conduct, he quickly discovered that the hatred of Mrs. Luttridge was her ruling passion. Above nine years of continual warfare had exasperated the tempers of both parties, and no opportunities of manifesting their mutual antipathy were ever neglected. Extravagantly as lady Delacour loved admiration, the highest possible degree of

positive praise was insipid to her taste, if it did not imply some superiority over the woman whom she considered as her perpetual rival.

Now, it had been said by the coachmaker, that Mrs. Luttridge would sport a most elegant new vis à-vis, on the King's birthday. Lady Delacour was immediately ambitious to outshine her in equipage; and it was this paltry ambition, that made her condescend to all the meanness of the transaction, by which she obtained miss Portman's draught, and Clarence Hervey's two hundred guineas.—The great, the important day at length arrived. —Her ladyship's triumph in the morning, at the drawing-room, was complete.—Mrs. Luttridge's dress, Mrs. Luttridge's vis-à-vis, Mrs. Luttridge's horses, were nothing—absolutely nothing, in comparison with lady Delacour's—her ladyship enjoyed the full exultation of vanity; and at night she went in high spirits to the birthnight ball.

"O, my dearest Belinda," said she, as

she left her dressing-room, how terrible a thing it is, that you cannot go with me! —None of the joys of this life are without alloy! — 'Twould be too much to see in one night Mrs. Luttridge's mortification, and my Belinda's triumph. — Adieu! my love — we shall live to see another birth-day, it is to be hoped. — Marriott, my drops. — O, I have taken them."

Belinda, after her ladyship's departure, retired to the library. — Her time passed so agreeably during lady Delacour's absence, that she was surprised when she heard the clock strike twelve.

"Is it possible," thought she, "that I have spent three hours by myself in a library, without being tired of my existence? — How different are my feelings now, to what they would have been in the same circumstances six months ago! — I should then have thought the loss of a birthnight ball a mighty trial of temper.— It is singular, that my having spent a winter with one of the most dissipated women in England should have sobered

my mind so completely. If I had never seen the utmost extent of the pleasures of the world, as they are called, my imagination might have misled me to the end of my life; but now I can judge from my own experience, and I am convinced that the life of a fine lady would never make me happy.—Dr. X—— told me, the other day, that he thinks me formed for something better, and he is incapable of flattery."

The idea of Clarence Hervey was so intimately connected with that of his friend, that miss Portman could seldom separate them in her imagination—and she was just beginning to reflect upon the manner in which Clarence looked, whilst he declared to sir Philip Baddely, that he would never give up Dr. X——, when she was startled by the entrance of Marriott.

"O, miss Portman, what shall we do! —What shall we do?—My lady! my poor lady!" cried she.

"What is the matter?" said Belinda.

"The horses—the young horses!—O I wish my lady had never seen them.—O my lady, my poor lady, what will become of her?"

It was some minutes before Belinda could obtain from Marriott any intelligible account of what had happened.

"All I know, ma'am, is what James has just told me," said Marriot.—"My lady gave the coachman orders upon no account to let Mrs. Luttridge's carriage get before hers.—Mrs. Luttridge's coachman would not give up the point either.—My lady's horses were young and ill broke, they tell me, and there was no managing of them no ways.—The carriages got some how across one another, and my lady was overturned, and all smashed to atoms.—O ma'am!" continued Marriott, "if it had not been for Mr. Hervey, they say, my lady would never have been got out of the crowd alive.—He's bringing her home in his own carriage—God bless him!"

"But is lady Delacour hurt?" cried Belinda.

"She *must*—to be sure she must, ma'am," cried Marriott, putting her hand to her bosom.—"But let her be ever so much hurt, my lady will keep it to herself—the footmen swear she did not give a scream, not a single scream; so it's their opinion she was no ways hurt—But that I know can't be — And indeed, they are thinking so much about the carriage, that they can't give one any rational account of any thing—and as for myself, I'm sure I'm in such a flutter.—Lord knows, I advised my lady not to go with the young horses, no later than"—

"Hark!" cried Belinda, "here they are." She ran down stairs instantly. The first object that she saw was lady Delacour in convulsions—the street-door was open—the hall was crowded with servants. Belinda made her way through them, and, in a calm voice, requested that lady Delacour might immediately be brought to her own dressing-room, and that she should there be left to Marriott's care and hers. Mr. Hervey assisted in carrying lady Dela-

cour—she came to her senses as they were taking her up stairs. "Set me down—set me down," she exclaimed. "I am not hurt—I am quite well—Where's Marriott? Where's miss Portman?"

"Here we are—you shall be carried quite safely—trust to me," said Belinda, in a firm tone, "and do not struggle."

Lady Delacour submitted—she was in agonizing pain; but her fortitude was so great that she never uttered a groan. It was the constraint which she had put upon herself, by endeavouring not to scream, which threw her into convulsions. "She is hurt, I am sure she is hurt, though she will not acknowledge it," cried Clarence Hervey. "My ancle is sprained, that's all." said lady Delacour—"lay me on this sofa, and leave me to Belinda."

"What's all this?" cried lord Delacour, staggering into the room: he was much intoxicated, and in this condition had just come home, as they were carrying lady Delacour up stairs: he could not be made to understand the truth, but as soon as he

heard Clarence Hervey's voice, he insisted upon going up to *his wife's* dressing room. It was a very unusual thing, but neither Champfort nor any one else could restrain him, the moment that he had formed this idea; he forced his way into the room.

"What's all this?—Colonel Lawless!" said he, addressing himself to Clarence Hervey, whom, in the confusion of his mind, he mistook for the colonel, the first object of his jealousy. "Colonel Lawless," cried his lordship, "you are a villain.—I always knew it."

"Softly!—she's in great pain, my lord," said Belinda, catching lord Delacour's arm, just as he was going to strike Clarence Hervey. She led him to the sofa where lady Delacour lay, and uncovering her ancle, which was much swelled, showed it to him. His lordship, who was a humane man, was somewhat moved by this appeal to his remaining senses, and he began roaring as loud as he possibly could for arquebusade.

Lady Delacour rested her head upon

the back of the sofa, her hands moved with convulsive twitches — she was perfectly silent. Marriott was in a great bustle, running backwards and forwards for she knew not what, and continually repeating, "I wish nobody would come in here but miss Portman and me.—My lady says nobody must come in.—Lord bless me!—my lord here too!"

"Have you any arquebusade, Marriott? Arquebusade, for your lady directly!" cried his lordship, following her to the door of the boudoir, where she was going for some drops.

"O my lord, you can't come in, I assure you, my lord, there's nothing here, my lord, nothing of the sort," said Marriott, setting her back against the door.—Her terrour and embarrassment instantly recalled all the jealous suspicions of lord Delacour. "Woman!" cried he, "I *will* see whom you have in this room!—You have some one concealed there, and I *will* go in."—Then with brutal oaths he dragged Mar-

riott from the door, and snatched the key from her struggling hand.

Lady Delacour started up, and gave a scream of agony. "My lord!—Lord Delacour," cried Belinda, springing forward, "hear me."

Lord Delacour stopped short.—"Tell me then," cried lord Delacour, "is not a lover of lady Delacour's concealed there?" "No!—No!—No!" answered Belinda. "Then a lover of miss Portman's," said lord Delacour—"Gad! we have hit it now, I believe."

"Believe whatever you please, my lord," said Belinda hastily—but give me the key."

Clarence Hervey drew the key from lord Delacour's hand, gave it to miss Portman without looking at her, and immediately withdrew.—Lord Delacour followed him with a sort of drunken laugh; and no one remained in the room but Marriott, Belinda, and lady Delacour.—Marriott was so much *fluttered*, as she said,

that she could do nothing.—Miss Portman locked the room door, and began to undress lady Delacour, who lay motionless. "Are we by ourselves," said lady Delacour, opening her eyes.

"Yes—are you much hurt?" said Belinda. "O, you are a charming girl!" said lady Delacour.—"Who would have thought you had so much presence of mind and courage—have you the key safe? "Here it is," said Belinda, producing it; and she repeated her question—"are you much hurt?" "I am not in pain now," said lady Delacour, "but I *have* suffered terribly.—If I could get rid of all this finery—if you could put me to bed I could sleep perhaps."

Whilst Belinda was undressing lady Delacour, she shrieked several times; but between every interval of pain she repeated, "I shall be better to morrow." As soon as she was in bed, she desired Marriott to give her double her usual quantity of laudanum; for that all the inclination which she had felt to sleep was gone, and

that she could not endure the shooting pains that she felt in her breast.

"Leave me alone with your lady, Marriott," said miss Portman, taking the bottle of laudanum from her trembling hand, "and go to bed; for I am sure you are not able to sit up any longer."

As she spoke, she took Marriott into the adjoining dressing-room.—"O dear miss Portman," said Marriott, who was sincerely attached to her lady, and who at this instant forgot all her jealousies, and all her love of power—"I'll do any thing you ask me—but pray let me stay in the room, though I know I'm quite helpless.—It will be too much for you to be here all night by yourself.—The convulsions may take my lady.—What shrieks she gives every now and then!—and nobody knows what's the matter but ourselves; and every body in the house is asking me why a surgeon is not sent for, if my lady is so much hurt. O I can't answer for it to my conscience, to have kept the matter secret so long; for to be sure a physician, if had in time,

might have saved my lady—but now nothing can save her!"—And here Marriott burst into tears.

"Why don't you give me the laudanum?" cried lady Delacour, in a loud peremptory voice—"Give it to me instantly."—"No," said miss Portman firmly.—"Hear me, lady Delacour—you must allow me to judge, for you know that you are not in a condition to judge for yourself—or rather you must allow me to send for a physician, who may judge for us both."

"A physician!" cried lady Delacour,—"Never—never.—I charge you let no physician be sent for.—Remember your promise—you *cannot* betray me—you *will* not betray me."

"No," said Belinda, "of that I have given sufficient proof—but you will betray yourself—it is already known by your servants that you have been hurt by the overturn of your carriage—if you do not let either a surgeon or physician see you, it will excite surprise and suspicion.—It

is not in your power when violent pain seizes you to refrain from"—"It is," interrupted lady Delacour, "not another scream shall you hear—only do not, do not, my dear Belinda, send for a physician."

"You will throw yourself again into convulsions," said Belinda—"Marriott you see, has lost all command of herself—I shall not have strength to manage you—perhaps I may lose my presence of mind, I cannot answer for myself—your husband may desire to see you."

"No danger of that," said lady Delacour, "tell him my ancle is sprained—tell him I am bruised all over—tell him any thing you will—he will not trouble himself any more about me—he will forget all that passed to night by the time he is sober.—O!—give me the laudanum, dearest Belinda—and say no more about physicians."

It was in vain to reason with lady Delacour. Belinda attempted to persuade her—"for my sake, dear lady Delacour,"

said she, "let me send for D. X——, he is a man of honour, your secret will be perfectly safe with him."

"He will tell it to Clarence Hervey," said lady Delacour—"of all men living I would not send for Dr. X——, I will not see him if he comes."

"Then," said Belinda, calmly, but with a fixed determination of countenance, "I must leave you to morrow morning—I must return to Bath."

"Leave me! remember your promise."

"Circumstances have occurred, about which I have made no promise," said Belinda—"I must leave you, unless you will now give me your permission to send for Dr. X——."

Lady Delacour hesitated. "You see," continued Belinda, "that I am in earnest, when I am gone you will have no friend left—when I am gone your secret will inevitably be discovered, for without me Marriott will not have sufficient strength of mind to keep it."

"Do you think we might trust Dr. X——?" said lady Delacour.

"I am sure you may trust him," said Belinda with energy: "I will pledge my life upon his honour."

"Then send for him, since it must be so," said lady Delacour.

No sooner had the words passed lady Delacour's lips, than Belinda flew to execute her orders.—Marriott recovered her senses, when she heard that her ladyship had consented to send for a physician, but she declared, that she could not conceive how any thing less than the power of magic could have brought her lady to such a determination.

Belinda had scarcely dispatched a servant for Dr. X——, when lady Delacour repented of the permission she had given, and all that could be said to pacify, only irritated her temper.—She became delirious, Belinda's presence of mind never forsook her, she remained quietly beside the bed waiting for the arrival of Dr. X——, and she absolutely refused admit-

tance to the servants, who, drawn by their lady's outrageous cries, continually came to her door with offers of assistance.

About four o'clock the doctor arrived, and miss Portman was relieved from some of her anxiety. He assured her that there was no immediate danger, and he promised that the secret which she had entrusted to him should be faithfully kept.—He remained with her some hours, till lady Delacour became more quiet and fell asleep, exhausted with delirious exertions.—"I think I may now leave you," said Dr. X——, but as he was going through the dressing-room, Belinda stopped him.—"Now that I have time to think of myself," said she—"let me consult you as my friend—I am not used to act entirely for myself, and I shall be most grateful if you will assist me with your advice.—I hate all mysteries, but I feel myself bound in honour to keep the secret, with which lady Delacour has entrusted me.—Last night I was so circumstanced,

that I could not extricate her ladyship without exposing herself to—to suspicion."

Miss Portman then related all that had passed about the mysterious door, which lord Delacour, in his fit of drunken jealousy, had insisted upon breaking open.

"Mr. Hervey," continued Belinda, "was present when all this happened—he seemed much surprised—I should be sorry that—he should remain in an errour which might be fatal to my reputation—you know a woman ought not even to be suspected—yet how to remove this suspicion I know not, because I cannot enter into any explanation without betraying lady Delacour—she has, I know, a peculiar dread of Mr. Hervey's discovering the truth."

"And is it possible," cried Dr. X——, "that any woman should be so meanly selfish, as thus to expose the reputation of her friend merely to preserve her own vanity from mortification."

"Hush—don't speak so loud," said Be-

linda, "you will awaken her—and at present she is certainly more an object of pity than of indignation.—If you will have the goodness to come with me, I will take you by a back-staircase up to the *mysterious boudoir.*—I am not too proud to give positive proofs of my speaking truth; the key of that room now lies on lady Delacour's bed—it was that which she grasped in her hand during her delirium—she has now let it fall—it opens both the doors of the boudoir—you shall see," added miss Portman with a smile, "that I am not afraid to let you unlock either of them."

"As a polite man," said Dr. X——, "I believe that I should absolutely refuse to take any external evidence of a lady's truth; but demonstration is unanswerable even by enemies, and I will not sacrifice your interests to the foppery of my politeness—so I am ready to follow you. The curiosity of the servants may have been excited by last night's disturbance, and I

see no method so certain as that which you propose of preventing busy Rumour. That goddess (let Ovid say what he pleases) was born and bred in a kitchen, or a servant's hall. —But," continued Dr. X——, " my dear miss Portman, you will put a stop to a number of charming stories by this prudence of yours—a romance called the Mysterious Boudoir, of nine volumes at least, might be written on this subject, if you would only condescend to act like almost all other heroines, that is to say, without common sense."

The doctor now followed Belinda, and satisfied himself by ocular demonstration, that this cabinet was the retirement of disease, and not of pleasure.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning when Dr. X—— got home; he found Clarence Hervey waiting for him. Clarence seemed to be in great agitation, though he endeavoured, with all the power which he possessed over himself, to suppress his emotion.

"You have been to see lady Delacour," said he, calmly—"Is she much hurt?—It was a terrible accident."

"She has been much hurt," said Dr. X——, "and she has been for some hours delirious—but ask me no more questions now, for I am asleep and must go to bed—unless you have any thing to say that can waken me—you look as if some great misfortune had befallen you, what is the matter?"

"O, my dear friend," said Hervey, taking his hand—"do not jest with me, I am not able to bear your raillery in my present temper—in one word, I fear that Belinda is unworthy of my esteem—I can tell you no more—except that I am more miserable than I thought any woman could make me."

"You are in a prodigious hurry to be miserable," said Dr. X——; "upon my word, I think you would make a mighty pretty hero in a novel; you take things very propely for granted, and stretched

out upon that sofa, you act the distracted lover vastly well—and to complete the matter, you cannot tell me why you are more miserable than ever man or hero was before.—I must tell you then, that you have still more cause for jealousy than you suspect.—Ay, start—every jealous man starts at the sound of the word jealousy—a certain symptom this of the disease."

"You mistake me," cried Clarence Hervey, "no man is less disposed to jealousy than I am—but——

"But your mistress—no, not your mistress, for you have never yet declared to her your attachment—but the lady you admire will not let a drunken man unlock a door, and you immediately suppose—

"She has mentioned the circumstance to you!" exclaimed Hervey, in a joyful tone—"then she *must* be innocent."

"Admirable reasoning!—I was going to have told you just now, if you would have suffered me to speak connectedly, that you have more reason for jealousy

than you suspect, for miss Portman has actually unlocked for me—for me! look at me—the door, the mysterious door—and whilst I live, and whilst she lives, we can neither of us ever tell you the cause of the mystery.—All I can tell you is that no lover is in the case, upon my honour—and now, if you should ever mistake curiosity in your own mind for jealousy, expect no pity from me."

"I should deserve none," said Clarence Hervey, "you have made me the happiest of men."

"The happiest of men!—No, no; keep that superlative exclamation for a future occasion.—But now you behave like a reasonable creature, you deserve to hear the praises of your Belinda—I am so much charmed with her, that I wish——"

"When can I see her," interrupted Hervey. "I'll go to her this instant."

"Gently," said Dr. X——, "you forget what time of the day it is—you forget that miss Portman has been up all night—

that lady Delacour is extremely ill—and that this would be the most unseasonable opportunity you could possibly choose for your visit."

To this observation Clarence Hervey assented; but he immediately seized a pen from the doctor's writing-table, and began a letter to Belinda.—The doctor threw himself upon his sofa, saying—"Waken me when you want me"—and in a few minutes he was fast asleep.

"Doctor, upon second thoughts," said Clarence, rising suddenly, and tearing his letter down the middle, "I cannot write to her yet—I forgot the reformation of lady Delacour—how soon do you think she will be well?—Besides, I have another reason for not writing to Belinda at present.—You must know, my dear doctor, that I have, or had, another mistress."

"Another mistress indeed!" cried doctor X——, trying to waken himself.

"Good God! I do believe you've been asleep."

"I do believe I have."

"But is it possible that you could fall sound asleep in that time?"

"Very possible," said the doctor, "what is there so extraordinary in a man's falling asleep?—men are apt to sleep some time within the four and twenty hours—unless they have half a dozen mistresses to keep them awake, as you seem to have, my good friend."

A servant now came into the room with a letter, that had just arrived express from the country for Dr. X——."

"This is another affair," cried he, rousing himself.

The letter required the doctor's immediate attendance. He shook hands with Clarence Hervey——

"My dear friend, I am really concerned that I cannot stay to hear the history of your six mistresses; but you see that this is an affair of life and death."

"Farewell," said Clarence, "I have not six, I have only three goddesses; even if you count lady Delacour for one.—But

I really wanted your advice in good earnest."

"If your case be desperate, you can write, cannot you?—Direct to me at Horton-hall, Cambridge.—In the mean time, as far as general rules go, I can give you my advice gratis, in the formula of an old Scotch song——

"'Tis good to be merry and wise,
'Tis good to be honest and true,
'Tis good to be off with the old luve,
Before you be on with the new."

CHAPTER XI.

DIFFICULTIES.

BEFORE he left town Dr. X—— called in Berkeley-square, to see lady Delacour; he found that she was out of all immediate danger.—Miss Portman was sorry that he was obliged to quit her at this time, but she felt the necessity for his going; he was sent for to attend Mr. Horton, an intimate friend of his, a gentleman of great talents, and of the most active benevolence, who had just been seized with a violent fever, in consequence of his exertions in saving the poor inhabitants of a village in his neighbourhood from the effects of a dreadful fire, which broke out in the middle of the night.

Lady Delacour, who heard Dr. X—— giving this account to Belinda, drew back her curtain, and said——

"Begone this instant, doctor—I am out of all immediate danger, you say—but if I were not—I must die in the course of a few months, you know—and what is my life, compared with the chance of saving your excellent friend!—He is of some use in this world—I am of none—begone, this instant, doctor."

"What a pity," said Dr. X——, as he left the room, "that a woman who is capable of so much magnanimity should have wasted her life on petty objects."

"Her life is not yet at an end—O, sir, if you *could* save her!" cried Belinda.

Doctor X—— shook his head—but returning to Belinda, after going half way down stairs, he added, "when you read this paper, you will know all that I can tell you upon the subject."

Belinda, the moment the doctor was gone, shut herself up in her own room, to read the paper which he had given to her. Dr. X—— first stated that he was by no means certain, that lady Delacour

really had the complaint, which she so much dreaded; but it was impossible for him to decide without farther examination, to which her ladyship could not be prevailed upon to submit. Then he mentioned all that he thought would be most efficacious in mitigating the pain that lady Delacour might feel, and all that could be done, with the greatest probability of prolonging her life.—And he concluded with the following words:

"These are all temporising expedients: according to the usual progress of the disease, lady Delacour may live a year or perhaps two.

"It is possible that her life might be saved by a *skilful* surgeon.—By a few words that dropped from her ladyship last night, I apprehend that she has some thoughts of submitting to an operation, which will be attended with much pain and danger, even if she employ the most experienced surgeon in London; but if she put herself, from a vain hope of secrecy, into ignorant hands, she will inevitably destroy herself."

After reading this paper, Belinda had some faint hopes that lady Delacour's life might be saved; but she determined to wait till doctor X—— should return to town, before she mentioned his opinion to his patient; and she earnestly hoped that no idea of putting herself into ignorant hands would recur to her ladyship.

Lord Delacour, in the morning, when he was sober, retained but a confused idea of the events of the preceding night; but he made an awkardly good natured apology to miss Portman for his intrusion, and for the disturbance he had occasioned, which he said must be laid to the blame of lord Studly's admirable Burgundy.—He expressed much concern for lady Delacour's terrible accident, but he could not help observing, that if his advice had been taken the thing could not have happened—that it was the consequence of her ladyship's self-willedness about the young horses.

"How she got the horses without paying for them, or how she got money to

pay for them, I know not," said his lordship; "for I said I would have nothing to do with the business, and I have kept to my resolution."

His lordship finished his morning visit to miss Portman, by observing that "the house would now be very dull for her; that the office of a nurse was ill-suited to so young and beautiful a lady, but that her undertaking it with so much cheerfulness was a proof of a degree of good nature, that was not always to be met with in the young and handsome."

The manner in which lord Delacour spoke convinced Belinda, that he was in reality attached to his wife, however the fear of being, or of appearing to be governed by her ladyship might have estranged him from her, and from home. —She now saw in him much more good sense, and symptoms of a more amiable character than his lady had described, or than she ever would allow that he possessed.

The reflections however, which miss

Portman made upon the miserable life this ill-matched coupled led together did not incline her in favour of marrigage in general; great talents on one side, and good nature on the other, had, in this instance, tended only to make each party unhappy. Matches of interest, convenience, and vanity, she was convinced diminished, instead of increasing happiness.—Of domestic felicity she had never, except during her childhood, seen examples—she had, indeed, heard from Dr. X—— descriptions of the happy family of lady Anne Percival, but she feared to indulge the romantic hope of ever being loved by a man of superiour genius and virtue, with a temper and manners suited to her taste.—The only person she had seen, who at all answered this description, was Mr. Hervey, and it was firmly fixed in her mind, that he was not a marrying man, and consequently not a man of whom any prudent woman would suffer herself to think with partiality. She could not doubt

that he liked her society and conversation; his manner had sometimes expressed more than cold esteem.—Lady Delacour had assured her that it expressed love; but lady Delacour was an imprudent woman in her own conduct, and not scrupulous as to that of others.—Belinda was not guided by her opinions of propriety; and now that her ladyship was confined to her bed, and not in a condition to give her either advice or protection, she felt that it was peculiarly incumbent on her to guard, not only her conduct from reproach, but her heart from the hopeless misery of an ill-placed attachment.—She examined herself with firm impartiality—she recollected the excessive pain that she had endured, when she first heard Clarence Hervey say, that Belinda Portman was a compound of art and affectation; but this she thought was only the pain of offended pride—of proper pride.—She recollected the extreme anxiety she had felt, even within the last four and twenty hours,

concerning the opinion which he might form of the transaction about the key of the boudoir—but this anxiety she justified to herself; it was due, she thought, to her reputation; it would have been inconsistent with female delicacy, to have been indifferent about the suspicions that necessarily arose from the circumstances in which she was placed.—Before Belinda had completed her self-examination, Clarence Hervey called to inquire after lady Delacour.—Whilst he spoke of her ladyship, and of his concern for the dreadful accident, of which he believed himself to be in a great measure the cause, his manner and language were animated and unaffected; but the moment that this subject was exhausted, he became embarrassed; though he distinctly expressed perfect confidence and esteem for her, he seemed to wish, and yet to be unable to support the character of a friend, contradistinguished to an admirer. He seemed conscious that he could not, with propriety, advert to the suspicions and jealousy

which he had felt the preceding night; for a man who has never declared love would be absurd and impertinent, were he to betray jealousy.—Clarence was destitute neither of address nor presence of mind, but an accident happened, when he was just taking leave of miss Portman, which threw him into utter confusion.—It surprised, if it did not confound Belinda.—She had forgotten to ask Dr. X— for his direction; and as she thought it might be necessary to write to him concerning lady Delacour's health, she begged of Mr. Hervey to give it to her.—He took a letter out of his pocket, and wrote the direction with a pencil, but as he opened the paper, to tear off the outside, on which he had been writing, a lock of hair dropped out of the letter; he hastily stooped for it, and as he took it up from the ground the lock unfolded. — Belinda, though she cast but one involuntary, hasty glance at it, was struck with the beauty of its colour, and its uncommon length.—The confusion of Clarence Her-

vey convinced her, that he was extremely interested about the person to whom the hair belonged, and the species of alarm which she had felt at this discovery, opened her eyes effectually to the state of her own heart.—She was sensible that the sight of a lock of hair, however long, or however beautiful, in the hands of any man but Clarence Hervey, could not possibly have excited any emotion in her mind. " Fortunately, " thought she, " I have discovered that he is attached to another, whilst it is yet in my power to command my affections, and he shall see that I am not so weak as to form any false expectations from what I must now consider as mere common place flattery." Belinda was glad that lady Delacour was not present at the discovery of the lock of hair, as she was aware that she would have rallied her unmercifully upon the occasion; and she rejoiced that she had not been prevailed upon to give *madame la comtesse de Pomenars* a lock of her *belle chevelure.* She could not help thinking,

from the recollection of several minute circumstances, that Clarence Hervey had endeavoured to gain an interest in her affections, and she felt that there would be great impropriety in receiving his ambiguous visits during lady Delacour's confinement to her room.—She therefore gave orders, that Mr. Hervey should not in future be admitted, till her ladyship should again see company. This precaution proved totally superfluous, for Mr. Hervey never called again, during the whole course of lady Delacour's confinement; though his servant regularly came every morning with inquiries after her ladyship's health.—She kept her room for about ten days: a confinement to which she submitted with extreme impatience; bodily pain she bore with fortitude, but constraint and ennui she could not endure.

One morning as she was sitting up in bed, looking over a large collection of notes, and cards of inquiry after her health, she exclaimed—

"These people will soon be tired of* bidding their footmen put it into their heads to inquire whether I am alive or dead—I must appear amongst them again, if it be only for a few minutes, or they will forget me.—When I am fatigued, I will retire, and you, my dear Belinda, shall represent me—so tell them to open my doors, and unmuffle the knocker—let me hear the sound of music and dancing, and let the house be filled again, for Heaven's sake.—Dr. Zimmermann should never have been my physician, for he would have prescribed solitude.—Now solitude and silence are worse for me than poppy and mandragora.—It is impossible to tell how much silence tires the ears of those who have not been used to it.—For mercy's sake, Marriott," continued her ladyship, turning to Marriott, who just then came softly into the room—"For mercy's sake, don't walk to all eternity on tiptoes—to see people gliding about

* "Would Chloe know if you're alive or dead,
She bids her footman put it in her head."

like ghosts makes me absolutely fancy myself amongst the shades below.—I would rather be stunned by the loudest peal, that ever thundering footman gave at my door, than hear Marriott lock that boudoir, as if my life depended on my not hearing the key turned."

"Dear me! I never knew any lady that was ill, except my lady, complain of one's not making a noise to disturb her," said Marriott.

"Then, to please you, Marriott, I will complain of the only noise that does, or ever did disturb me—the screaming of your odious macaw."

Now Marriott had a prodigious affection for this macaw, and she defended it with as much eagerness as if it had been her child.

"Odious! O dear, my lady! to call my poor macaw odious!—I didn't expect it would ever have come to this—I am sure I don't deserve it—I'm sure I don't deserve, that my lady should have taken such a dislike to me."

And here Marriott actually burst into tears.—"But, my dear Marriott," said lady Delacour, "I only object to your macaw—may not I dislike your macaw without disliking you?—I have heard of 'love me, love my dog'—but I never heard of 'love me, love my bird.'—Did you, miss Portman?"

Marriott turned sharply round upon miss Portman, and darted a fiery look at her through the midst of her tears.—"Then 'tis plain," said she, "who I'm to thank for this," and as she left the room her lady could not complain of her shutting the door after her too gently.

"Give her three minutes grace, and she will come to her senses," said lady Delacour—"for she is not a bankrupt in sense. —O, three minutes won't do, I must allow her three days grace, I perceive," said lady Delacour, when Marriott half an hour afterward reappeared, with a face which might have sat for the picture of ill humour. Her ill-humour, however, did not prevent her from attending her lady as usual; she

performed all her customary offices with the most officious zeal, but in profound silence, except every now and then she would utter a sigh, which seemed to say, "See how much I'm attached to my lady, and yet my lady hates my macaw!" Her lady, who perfectly understood the language of sighs, and felt the force of Marriott's, forbore to touch again on the tender subject of the macaw, hoping that when her house was once more filled with company, she should be relieved by more agreeable noises from continually hearing this pertinacious tormentor.

As soon as it was known that lady Delacour was sufficiently recovered to receive company, her door was crowded with carriages; and as soon as it was understood that balls and concerts were to go on as usual at her house, her "troops of friends" appeared to congratulate her, and to amuse themselves.

"How stupid it is," said laid Delacour to Belinda, "to hear congratulatory speeches from people, who would not care

if I were in the black hole at Calcutta this minute; but we must take the world as it goes—dirt and precious stones mixed together. Clarence Hervey, however, *n'a pas une ame de boue*; he I am sure has been really concerned for me: he thinks that his young horses were the sole cause of the whole evil, and he blames himself so sincerely, and so unjustly, that I really was half tempted to undeceive him; but that would have been doing him an injury; for you know great philosophers tell us, that there is no pleasure in the world equal to that of being well deceived, especially by the fair sex.—Seriously, Belinda, is it my fancy, or is not Clarence wonderfully changed?—Is not he grown pale, and thin, and serious, not to say melancholy? What have you done to him since I have been ill?"

"Nothing—I have never seen him."

"No! then the thing is accounted for very naturally—he is in despair, because he has been banished from your divine presence."

"More likely, because he has been in anxiety about your ladyship," said Belinda.

"I will find out the cause, let it be what it may," said lady Delacour—"luckily my address is equal to my curiosity, and that is saying a great deal."

Notwithstanding all her ladyship's address, her curiosity was baffled; she could not discover Clarence Hervey's secret, and she began to believe, that the change which she had noticed in his looks and manner was imaginary or accidental. Had she seen more of him, at this time she would not have so easily given up her suspicions; but she saw him only for a few minutes every day, and during that time he talked to her with all his former gayety: besides, lady Delacour had herself a daily part to perform, which occupied almost her whole attention. Notwithstanding the vivacity which she affected, Belinda perceived that she was now more seriously alarmed than she had ever been about her health. It was all that her utmost exertions could ac-

complish, to appear for a short time in the day—some evenings she came into company only for half an hour, on other days only for a few minutes, just walked through the rooms, paid her compliments to every body, complained of a nervous head-ache, left Belinda to do the honours for her, and retired.

Miss Portman was now really placed in a difficult and dangerous situation, and she had ample opportunities of learning and practising prudence.—All the fashionable dissipated young men in London frequented lady Delacour's house, and it was said, that they were drawn thither by the attractions of her fair representative. The gentlemen considered a niece of Mrs. Stanhope's as their lawful prize. The ladies wondered that the men could think Belinda Portman a beauty; but whilst they affected to scorn, they sincerely feared her charms.—Thus, left entirely to her own discretion, she was exposed at once to the malignant eye of envy, and the insidious voice of flattery—she had no friend, no

guide, and scarcely a protector: her aunt Stanhope's letters, indeed, continually supplied her with advice, but with advice which she could not follow consistently with her own feelings and principles.—Lady Delacour, even if she had been well, was not a person on whose counsels she could rely: our heroine was not one of those daring spirits, who are ambitious of acting for themselves; she felt the utmost diffidence of her own powers, yet at the same time a firm resolution not to be led even by timidity into follies, which the example of lady Delacour had taught her to despise. Belinda's prudence seemed to increase with the necessity for it's exertion. It was not the mercenary wily prudence of a young lady, who has been taught to think it virtue to sacrifice the affections of her heart to the interests of her fortune—it was not the prudence of a cold and selfish, but of a modest and generous woman. —She found it most difficult to satisfy herself in her conduct towards Clarence Hervey: he seemed mortified and miserable if

she treated him merely as a common acquaintance, yet she felt the danger of admitting him to the familiarity of friendship: had she been thoroughly convinced that he was attached to some other woman, she hoped that she could freely converse with him, and look upon him as a married man; but notwithstanding the lock of beautiful hair, she could not entirely divest herself of the idea that she was beloved, when she observed the extreme eagerness with which Clarence Hervey watched all her motions, and followed her with his eye as if his fate depended upon her. She remarked that he endeavoured as much as possible to prevent this species of attention from being noticed, either by the public or by herself: his manner towards her every day became more distant and respectful, more constrained and embarrassed; but now and then a different look and expression escaped. She had often heard of Mr. Hervey's great *address* in affairs of gallantry, and she was sometimes inclined to believe that he was trifling with her, merely for

the glory of a conquest over her heart; at other times she suspected him of deeper designs upon her, such as would deserve contempt and detestation; but upon the whole she was disposed to believe, that he was entangled by some former attachment from which he could not extricate himself with honour; upon this supposition she thought him worthy of her esteem, and of her pity.

About this time sir Philip Baddely began to pay a sort of lounging attention to Belinda—he knew that Clarence Hervey liked her, and this was the principal cause of his desire to attract her attention.—"Belinda Portman," became his favourite toast, and amongst his companions he gave himself the air of talking of her with rapture.

"Rochfort," said he, one day to his friend—"damme, if I was to think of Belinda Portman in *any way*, you take me—Clary would look damned blue—hey? damned blue, and devilish small, and cursed silly too—hey?"

"'Pon honour, I should like to see him," said Rochfort—"'pon honour he deserves it from us, sir Phil, and I'll stand your friend with the girl, and it will do no harm to give her a hint of Clary's Windsor flame—as a dead secret—'pon honour he deserves it from us."

Now it seems that sir Philip Baddely and Mr. Rochfort, during the time of Clarence Hervey's intimacy with them, observed that he paid frequent visits at Windsor, and they took it into their heads that he kept a mistress there. They were very curious to see her, and unknown to Clarence, they made several attempts for this purpose; at last, one evening, when they were certain that he was not at Windsor, they scaled the high garden wall of the house which he frequented, and actually obtained a sight of a beautiful young girl and an elderly lady, whom they took for her gouvernante. This adventure they kept a profound secret from Clarence, because they knew that he would have quarrelled with them imme-

diately, and would have called them to account for their intrusion. They now determined to avail themselves of their knowledge, and of his ignorance of this circumstance; but they were sensible that it was necessary to go warily to work, lest they should betray themselves. Accordingly they began by dropping distant mysterious hints about Clarence Hervey, to lady Delacour and miss Portman.—Such for instance as—

"Damme, we all know Clary's a perfect connoisseur in beauty—hey, Rochfort—one beauty at a time is not enough for him—hey, damme? And it is not fashion, nor wit, nor elegance, and all that—that he looks for *always*."

These observations were accompanied with the most significant looks.—Belinda heard and saw all this in painful silence, but lady Delacour often used her address to draw some farther explanation from sir Philip—his regular answer was—"No, no, your ladyship must excuse me there, I can't peach, damme—hey, Rochfort?"

He was in hopes from the reserve with which miss Portman began to treat Clarence, that he should, without making any distinct charge, succeed in disgusting her with his rival.—Mr. Hervey was about this time less assiduous than formerly in his visits at lady Delacour's; sir Philip was there every day, and often for miss Portman's entertainment exerted himself so far as to tell the news of the town.—One morning, when Clarence Hervey happened to be present, the baronet thought it incumbent upon him to eclipse his rival in conversation, and he began to talk of the last fête champêtre, at Frogmore.

"What a cursed unlucky overturn that was of yours, lady Delacour, with those famous young horses—why—what with this sprain, and this nervous business, you've not been able to stir out since the birthday, and you've missed the breakfast, and all that, at Frogmore—why all the world staid broiling in town on purpose for it, and you that had a card too—how damned provoking."

"I regret extremely that my illness prevented me from being at this charming fête,—I regret it more on miss Portman's account than on my own," said her ladyship.—Belinda assured her that she felt no mortification from the disappointment.

"O, damme! but I would have driven you in my curricle," said sir Philip—"It was the finest sight and best conducted I ever saw, and only wanted miss Portman to make it complete.—We had gipsies, and Mrs. Mills the actress for the queen of the gipsies; and she gave us a famous good song, Rochfort, you know—and then there *was* two children upon an *ass*, damme, I don't know how they came there, for they're things one sees every day—and belonged only to two of the soldiers wives—for we had the whole band of the Staffordshire playing at dinner, and we had some famous glees—and Fawcett gave us his laughing song, and then we had the launching of the ship, and only it was a boat, it would have been well enough—but damme, the song of Polly

Oliver was worth the whole—except the Flemish Hercules—du Crow, you know, dressed in light blue and silver—and miss Portman! I wish you had seen this! three great coach wheels on his chin, and a ladder and two chairs and two children on them—and after that, he sported a musquet and bayonet with the point of the bayonet on his chin—faith! that was really famous!—but I forgot the Pyrrhic dance, miss Portman, which was damned fine too—danced in boots and spurs by those Hungarian fellows—they jump and turn about, and clap their knees with their hands, and put themselves in all sorts of ways—and then we had that song of Polly Oliver, as I told you before, and Mrs. Mills gave us—no, no—it was a drummer of the Staffordshire dressed as a gipsy girl, gave us *the cottage on the moor*, the most charming thing, and would suit your voice, miss Portman—damme you'd sing it like an angel—but where was I?—O, then they had tea—and fire places built of brick, out in the air—and then the en-

trance to the ball room was all a colonade done with lamps and flowers, and that sort of thing—and there was some bon mot (but that was in the morning) amongst the gipsies about an orange, and the stadtholder—and then there was a Turkish dance, and a Polonese dance, all very fine, but nothing to come up to the Pyrrhic touch, which was a great deal the most knowing, in boots and spurs—damme, now I can't describe the thing to you, 'tis a cursed pity you weren't there, damme."

Lady Delacour assured sir Philip that she had been more entertained by the description, than she could have been by the reality.—"Clarence, was not it the best description you ever heard?—But pray favour us with *a touch* of the Pyrrhic dance, sir Philip."

Lady Delacour spoke with such polite earnestness, and the baronet had so little penetration and so much conceit, that he did not suspect her of irony: he eagerly began to exhibit the Pyrrhic dance, but

in such a manner, that it was impossible for human gravity to withstand the sight. —Rochfort laughed first, lady Delacour followed him, and Clarence Hervey and Belinda could no longer restrain themselves.

"Damme, now I believe you've all been quizzing me, damme,"—cried the baronet, and he fell into a sulky silence, eyeing Clarence Hervey and miss Portman from time to time with what he meant for a *knowing* look. His silence and sulkiness lasted till Clarence took his leave. Soon afterward Belinda retired to the music room. Sir Philip then begged to speak a few words to lady Delacour, with a face of much importance; and after a preamble of nonsensical expletives, he said that his regard for her ladyship and miss Portman made him wish to explain hints which had been dropped from him at times, and which he could not explain to her satisfaction, without a promise of inviolable secresy.—"As Hervey is, or was a sort of a friend, I can't, damme,

mention this sort of thing without such a preliminary."—Lady Delacour gave the preliminary promise, and sir Philip informed her, that people began to take notice that Hervey was an admirer of miss Portman's, and that it might be a disadvantage to the young lady, as Mr. Hervey could have no serious intentions, because he had an attachment, to his certain knowledge, elsewhere.

"A matrimonial attachment?" said laid Delacour.

"Why damme, as to matrimony, I can't say, but the girl's so famously beautiful, and Clary has been constant to her so many years"—

"Many years—then she is not young?"

"O, damme, yes, she is not more than seventeen—and let her be what else she will, she's a famous fine girl.—I had a sight of her once at Windsor, by stealth."

And then the baronet described her after his manner.—"Where Clary keeps her now I can't make out, but he has taken her away from Windsor.—She was

then with a gouvernante, and is as proud as the devil, which smells like matrimony for Clary."

"And do you know this peerless damsel's name?"

"Damme, I think the old jezabel called her miss St. Pierre—ay, damme—it was Virginia too—Virginia St. Pierre."

"Virginia St. Pierre, a pretty romantic name," said lady Delacour—"miss Portman and I are extremely obliged by your attention to the preservation of our hearts—and I promise you we shall keep your council, and our own."

Sir Philip then, with more than his usual complement of oaths, pronounced miss Portman to be the finest girl he had ever seen, and took his leave.

When lady Delacour repeated this story to Belinda, she concluded by saying—"Now my dear, you know sir Philip Baddely has his own views in telling us all this—in telling *you* all this, for evidently he admires you, and consequently hates Clarence.—So I believe only half

the man says, and the other half, though it has made you turn so horribly pale, my love, I consider as a thing of no manner of consequence to you."

"Of no manner of consequence to me, I assure your ladyship," said Belinda, "I have always considered Mr. Hervey as—"

"O, as a common acquaintance, no doubt—but we'll pass over all those pretty speeches—I was going to say that this 'mistress of the wood' can be of no consequence to your happiness, because whatever that fool sir Philip may think, Clarence Hervey is not a man to go and marry a girl who has been his mistress for half a dozen years—do not look so shocked, my dear, I really cannot help laughing—I congratulate you, however, that the thing is no worse—it is all in rule and in course—when a man marries he sets up new equipages, and casts off old mistresses—or if you like to see the thing as a woman of sentiment, rather than as a woman of the world, here is the prettiest opportunity for your lover's making a sa-

crifice.—I am sorry I cannot make you smile, my dear—but consider, as nobody knows this naughty thing but ourselves, we are not called upon to bristle up our morality, and the most moral ladies in the world do not expect men to be as moral as themselves—so we may suit the measure of our external indignation to our real feelings—sir Philip cannot stir in the business—for he knows Clarence would call him out, if his secret viz to Virginia was to come to light—I advise you *d'aller votre train* with Clarence, without seeming to suspect him in the least—there is nothing like innocence in these cases, my dear—but I know by the Spanish haughtiness of your air at this instant, that you would sooner die the death of the sentimental—than follow my advice."

Belinda without any haughtiness, but with firm gentleness, replied, " that she had no designs whatever upon Mr. Hervey, and that therefore there could be no necessity for any manœuvring on her part. —That the ambiguity of his conduct to-

wards her had determined her long since to guard her affections, and that she had the satisfaction to feel, that they were entirely under her command."

"That is a great satisfaction indeed, my dear," said lady Delacour—"It is a pity that your countenance, which is usually expressive enough, should not at this instant obey your wishes and express perfect felicity—But though you feel no pain from disappointed affection, doubtless the concern that you show arises from the necessity you are under of withdrawing a portion of your esteem from Mr. Hervey—this is the style for you, is it not!—After all, my dear, the whole may be a quizzification of sir Philip's—and yet he gave me such a minute description of her person!—I am sure the man has not invention or taste enough to produce such a fancy piece."

"Did he mention," said Belinda, in a low voice—"the colour of her hair?"

"Yes—light brown—but the colour of

this hair seems to affect you more than all the rest."

Here, to Belinda's great relief, the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Marriott.—From all she had heard, but especially from the agreement between the colour of the hair which dropped from Hervey's letter with sir Philip's description of Virginia's, miss Portman was convinced that Clarence had some secret attachment; and she could not help blaming him in her own mind, for having, as she thought, endeavoured to gain her affections, whilst he knew that his heart was engaged to another.—Mr. Hervey, however, gave her no farther reason to suspect him of any design to win her love; for about this time his manner towards her changed, he obviously endeavoured to avoid her; his visits were short, and his attention was principally directed to lady Delacour; when she retired, he took his leave, and sir Philip Baddely had the field to himself.—The baronet, who thought that he had succeeded in producing a

coldness between Belinda and his rival, was surprised to find, that he could not gain any advantage for himself; for some time he had not the slightest thoughts of any serious connexion with the lady, but at last he was piqued by her indifference, and by the raillery of his friend Rochfort.

"'Pon honour," said Rochfort "the girl must be in love with Clary, for she minds you no more than if you were nobody."

"Damme, I could make her sing to another tune, if I pleased." said sir Philip; "but damme, it would cost me too much—a wife's too expensive a thing damme, nowadays.—Why, a man could have twenty curricles, and a fine stud, and a pack of hounds, and as many mistresses as he chooses into the bargain, for what it would cost him to take a wife.—O, damme, Belinda Portman's a fine girl but not worth so much as that comes to—and yet, confound me, if I should not like to see how blue Clary would look, if I

were to propose for her in good earnest —hey, Rochfort!—I should like to pay him for the way he served us about that quiz of a doctor, hey?"

"Ay," said, Rochfort, "you know he told us there was a *tant pis* and a *tant mieux* in every thing—he's not come to the *tant pis* yet.—'Pon honour, sir Philip, the thing rests with you."

The baronet vibrated for some time, between the fear of being taken in by one of Mrs. Stanhope's nieces, and the hope of triumphing over Clarence Hervey.—At last, what he called love prevailed over prudence, and he was resolved, cost him what it would, to have Belinda Portman. He had not the least doubt of being accepted, if he made a proposal of marriage; consequently, the moment that he came to this determination, he could not help assuming *d'avance* the tone of a favoured lover.

"Damme," cried sir Philip, "one night at lady Delacour's concert, I think that Mr. Hervey has taken out a patent

for talking to miss Portman—but damme if I give up this place, now I have got it," cried the baronet, seating himself beside Belinda.

Mr. Hervey did not contest his seat, and sir Philip kept his post during the remainder of the concert, but though he had the field entirely to himself, he could not think of any thing more interesting, more amusing, to whisper in Belinda's ear, than—" Don't you think the candles want snuffing famously*?"

* Taken from real life.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MACAW.

THE baronet determined the next day upon the grand attack. He waited upon miss Portman, with the certainty of being favourably received; but he was, nevertheless, somewhat embarrassed to know how to begin the conversation, when he found himself alone with the lady.

He twirled and twisted a short stick that he held in his hand, and put it in and out of his boot twenty times, and at last he began with—

"Lady Delacour's not gone to Harrowgate yet?"

"No—her ladyship has not yet felt herself well enough to undertake the journey."

"That was a cursed unlucky overturn—she may thank Clarence Hervey for that—it's like him—he thinks he's a better judge of horses, and wine, and every thing else, than any body in the world.—Damme now if I don't believe he thinks nobody else but himself has eyes enough to see that a fine woman's a fine woman—but I'd have him to know, that miss Belinda Portman has been sir Philip Baddely's toast these two months."

As this intelligence did not seem to make the expected impression upon miss Belinda Portman, sir Philip had recourse again to his little stick, with which he went through the sword exercise—after a silence of some minutes, and after walking to the window, and back again, as if to look for sense, he exclaimed—

"How is Mrs. Stanhope now, pray, miss Portman?—and your sister, Mrs. Tollemache—she was the finest woman, I

thought, the first winter she came out, that ever I saw, damme.—Have you ever been told that you're like her?"

"Never, sir."

"O, damn it then, but you are, only ten times handsomer."

"Ten times handsomer than the finest woman you ever saw, sir Philip?" said Belinda, smiling.

"Than the finest woman I had ever seen *then*," said sir Philip, "for damme I did not know what it was to be in love *then*," (here the baronet heaved an audible sigh) "I always laughed at love, and all that, *then*, and marriage particularly —I'll trouble you for Mrs. Stanhope's direction, miss Portman; I believe, to do the thing in style, I ought to write to her before I speak to you."

Belinda looked at him with astonishment, and laying down the pencil, with which she had just begun to write a direction to Mrs. Stanhope, she said—

"Perhaps, sir Philip, *to do the thing in style*, I ought to pretend at this instant

not to understand you,—but such false delicacy might mislead you—permit me therefore to say, that if I have any concern in the letter which you are going to write to my aunt Stanhope——"

"Well guessed!" interrupted sir Philip, "to be sure you have, and you're a charming girl, damn me if you aren't, for meeting my ideas in this way—which will save a cursed deal of trouble," added the polite lover, seating himself on the sofa, beside Belinda.

"To prevent your giving yourself any farther trouble then, sir, on my account," said miss Portman—

"Nay, damme, don't catch at that unlucky word, trouble, nor look so cursed angry; though it becomes you too, uncommonly, and I like pride in a handsome woman, if it was only for variety's sake, for it's not what one meets with often, nowadays.—As to trouble, all I meant was, the trouble of writing to Mrs. Stanhope, which of course I thank you for saving me; for to be sure, damn it, I'd

rather (and you can't blame me for that) have my answer from your own charming lips, if it was only for the pleasure of seeing you blush in this heavenly sort of style."

"To put an end to this heavenly sort of style, sir," said Belinda, withdrawing her hand, which the baronet took, as if he was confident of it's being his willing prize—"I must explicitly assure you, that it is not in my power to encourage your addresses.—I am fully sensible," added miss Portman, "of the honour sir Philip Baddely has done me, and I hope he will not be offended by the frankness of my answer."

"You can't be in earnest, miss Portman!" exclaimed the astonished baronet.

"Perfectly in earnest, sir Philip."

"Confusion seize me!" cried he, starting up, "if this isn't the most extraordinary thing I ever heard!—Will you do me the honour, madam, to let me know your particular objections to sir Philip Baddely."

"My objections," said Belinda, "cannot be obviated, and therefore it would be useless to state them."

"Nay—pray—ma'am—do me the favour—I only ask for information sake—is it to sir Philip Baddely's fortune, 15,000*l.* a year, you object, or to his family, or to his person.—O, curse it!" said he, changing his tone, you're only quizzing me to see how I should look—damn me you did it too well, you little coquet."

Belinda again assured him that she was entirely in earnest, and that she was incapable of the sort of coquetry which he ascribed to her.

"O, damme, ma'am, then I've no more to say—a coquet is a thing I understand as well as another, and if we had been only talking in the air, it would have been another thing; but when I come at once to a proposal in form, and a woman seriously tells me she has objections that cannot be obviated, damme, what must I, or what must the world conclude, but that she's very unaccountable, or that

she's engaged—which last I presume to be the case, and it would have been a satisfaction to me to have known it sooner —at any rate, it is a satifaction to me to know it now."

"I am sorry to deprive you of so much satisfaction," said miss Portman, "by assuring you, that I am not engaged to any one."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of lord Delacour, who came to inquire from miss Portman how his lady did. The baronet, after twisting his little black stick into all manner of shapes, finished by breaking it, and then having no other resource, suddenly wished miss Portman a good morning, and decamped with a look of silly ill humour.—He was determined to write to Mrs. Stanhope, whose influence over her niece he had no doubt would be decisive in his favour. "Sir Philip seems to be a little out of sorts this morning," said lord Delacour, "I am afraid he's angry with me for interrupting his conversation; but really I did

not know he was here, and I wanted to catch you a moment alone, that I might, in the first place, thank you for all your goodness to lady Delacour—she has had a tedious sprain of it; these nervous fevers and convulsions—I don't understand them, but I think Dr. X——'s prescriptions seem to have done her good, for she is certainly better of late, and I am glad to hear music and people again in the house, because I know all this is what my lady Delacour likes, and there is no reasonable indulgence that I would not willingly allow a wife; but I think there is a medium in all things.—I am not a man to be governed by a wife, and when I have once said a thing, I like to be steady, and always shall. And I am sure miss Portman has too much good sense to think me wrong; for now miss Portman, in that quarrel about the coach and horses, which you heard part of one morning at breakfast—I must tell you the beginning of that quarrel."

"Excuse me, my lord, but I would ra-

ther hear of the end than of the beginning of quarrels."

"That shows your good sense as well as your good nature. I wish you could make my lady Delacour of your taste—she does not want sense—but then (I speak to you freely of all that lies upon my mind, miss Portman, for I know—I *know* you have no delight in making mischief in a house)—between you and me, her sense is not of the right kind.—A woman may have too much wit—now too much is as bad as too little, and in a woman, worse; and when two people come to quarrel, then wit on either side, but more especially on the wife's, you know, is very provoking—'tis like concealed weapons, which are wisely forbidden by law.—If a person kill another in a fray with a concealed weapon, ma'am, by a sword in a cane for instance, 'tis murder by the law. Now even if it were not contrary to law, I would never have such a thing in my cane to carry about with me; for when a man's in a

passion he forgets every thing, and would as soon lay about him with a sword as with a cane—so it is better such a thing should not be in his power.—And it is the same with wit, which would be safest and best out of the power of some people."

"But is it fair, my lord, to make use of wit yourself to abuse wit in others?" said Belinda with a smile, which put his lordship into perfect good humour with both himself and his lady. "Why really," said he, "there would be no living with lady Delacour, if I did not come out with a little sly bit of wit now and then; but it is what I am not in the habit of doing, I assure you, except when very hard pushed.—But miss Portman, as you like so much to hear the end of quarrels, here's the end of one which you have a particular right to hear something of," continued his lordship, taking out his pocket-book and producing some bank notes—"you should have received this before, madam, if I had known of the transaction sooner—of your part of it, I mean."

"Milord, de man call to speak about de burgundy you order, milord," said Champfort, who came into the room with a sly inquisitive face.

"Tell him I'll see him immediately—show him into the parlour, and give him a newspaper to read,"

"Yes, milord—milord has it in his pocket since he dress."

"Here it is," said his lordship, and as Champfort came forward to receive the newspaper, his eye glanced at the bank-notes, and then at miss Portman.

"Here," continued lord Delacour, as Champfort had left the room—"here are your two hundred guineas, miss Portman, and as I am going to this man about my burgundy, and shall be out all the rest of the day, let me trouble you the next time you see lady Delacour to give her this pocketbook from me.—I should be sorry miss Portman, from any thing that has passed, should run away with the idea that I am a niggardly husband, or a tyrant, though I certainly like to be master in my

own house.—What are you doing, madam?—that is your note, that does not go into the pocket-book, you know."

"Permit me to put it in, my lord,' said Belinda, returning the pocketbook to him, "and to beg you will give lady Delacour the pleasure of seeing you: she has inquired several times whether your lordship were at home. I will run up to her dressing room and tell her that you are here."

"How lightly she goes, on the wings of good nature!" said lord Delacour, "I can do no less than follow her; for though I like to be treated with respect in my own house, there is a time for every thing.—I would not give lady Delacour the trouble of coming down here to me with her sprained ancle, especially as she has inquired for me several times."

His lordship's visit was not of unseasonable length; for he recollected that the man who came about the burgundy was waiting for him. But, perhaps, the shortness of the visit rendered it the more pleas-

ing, for lady Delacour afterward said to Belinda—

"My dear, would you believe it, my lord Delacour was absolutely a perfect example of the useful and agreeable this morning—who knows but he may become the sublime and beautiful in time—*en attendant.* Here are your two hundred guineas, my dear Belinda—a thousand thanks for the thing, and a million for the manner—manner is all in all in conferring favours. My lord, who, to do him justice, has too much honesty to pretend to more delicacy than he really possesses, told me that he had been taking a lesson from miss Portman this morning in the art of obliging; and really, for a grown gentleman, and for the first lesson, he comes on surprisingly. I do think, that by the time he is a widower, his lordship will be quite another thing—quite an agreeable man—not a genius, not a Clarence Hervey, that you cannot expect.—Apropos, what is the reason that we have seen so little of Clarence

Hervey lately? He has certainly some secret attraction elsewhere.—It cannot be that girl sir Philip mentioned.—No—she's nothing new. Can it be at lady Anne Percival's?—or where can it be? Whenever he sees me I think he asks, when we go to Harrowgate.—Now Oakly-park is within a few miles of Harrowgate. I will not go there, that's decided. Lady Anne is an exemplary matron, so she is out of the case; but I hope she has no *sister excellence*, no niece, no cousin, to entangle our hero."

"*Ours!*" said Belinda.

"Well, *yours*, then," said lady Delacour.

"*Mine!*"

"Yes, yours: I never in my life saw a better struggle between a sigh and a smile. But what have you done to poor sir Philip Baddely?—My lord Delacour told me—you know all people who have nothing else to say, tell news quicker than others—my lord Delacour told me, that he saw sir Philip part from you this morning in a terrible bad humour.—Come, whilst you tell you,

story, help me to string these pearls; that will save you from the necessity of looking at me, and will conceal your blushes— You need not be afraid of betraying sir Philip's secrets; for I could have told you long ago, that he would inevitably propose for you—the fact is nothing new or surprising to me, but I should really like to hear how ridiculous the man made himself."

"And that," said Belinda, "is the only thing which I do not wish to tell your ladyship."

"Lord, my dear, surely it is no secret that sir Philip Baddely is ridiculous—but you are so good natured that I can't be out of humour with you.—If you won't gratify my curiosity, will you gratify my taste, and sing for me once more that charming song which none but you *can* sing to please me—I must learn it from you absolutely."

Just as Belinda was beginning to sing, Marriott's macaw began to scream, so that lady Delacour could not hear any thing else.

"O, that odious macaw!" cried her ladyship, "I can endure it no longer"—and she rang her bell violently—"It kept me from sleeping all last night—Marriott must give up this bird—'Marriott, I cannot endure that macaw—you must part with it for my sake, Marriott.—It cost you four guineas, I am sure I would give five with the greatest pleasure to get rid of it, for it is the torment of my life."

"Dear my lady! I can assure you it is only because they will not shut the doors after them below as I desire—I am certain Mr. Champfort never shut a door after him in his life, nor never will if he was to live to the days of Methusalon."

"That is very little satisfaction to me, Marriott," said lady Delacour.

"And indeed, my lady, it is very little satisfaction to me, to hear my macaw abused as it is every day of my life, for Mr. Champfort's fault."

"But it cannot be Champfort's fault that I have ears."

"But if the doors were shut, my lady, you wouldn't or couldn't hear—as I'll

prove immediately," said Marriott, and she ran directly and shut, according to her own account, "eleven doors which were stark staring wide open."—"Now, my lady, you can't hear a single syllable of the macaw."

"No, but one of the eleven doors will open presently," said lady Delacour—"you will observe it is always more than ten to one against me."

A door opened, and the macaw was heard to scream

"The macaw must go, Marriott, that is certain," said her ladyship—firmly—

"Then *I* must go, my lady," said Marriott—angrily—"that is certain—for to part with my macaw is a thing I cannot do to please *any* body."—Her eyes turned with indignation upon Belinda—from association merely; because the last time that she had been angry about her macaw, she had also been angry with miss Portman, whom she imagined to be the secret enemy of her favourite.

"To stay another week in the house

after my macaw's discarded in disgrace, is a thing nothing shall prevail upon me to do."—She flung out of the room in a fury.

"Good Heavens! am I reduced to this?" said lady Delacour—"she thinks that she has me in her power—No—I can die without her—I have but a short time to live, I will not live a slave—let the woman betray me if she will—follow her this moment, my dear—generous friend! —tell her never to come into this room again — take this pocketbook — pay her whatever is due to her in the first place, and give her fifty guineas—observe!— not as a bribe, but as a reward."

It was a delicate and difficult commission—Belinda found Marriot at first incapable of listening to reason—"I am sure there is nobody in the world, that would treat me and my macaw in this manner, except my lady!" cried she, "and somebody must have set her against me, for it is not natural to her—but since she can't bear me about her any longer, 'tis time I should be gone."

"The only thing of which lady Delacour complained, was the noise of this macaw," said Belinda; "it was a pretty bird—how long have you had it?"

"Scarcely a month," said Marriott, sobbing.

"And how long have you lived with your lady?"

"Six years!—And to part with her after all!—"

"And for the sake of a macaw! And at a time when your lady is so much in want of you, Marriott!—You know she cannot live long, and she has much to suffer before she dies, and if you leave her, and if in a fit of passion you betray the confidence she has placed in you, you will reproach yourself for it ever afterward.—This bird —no, nor all the birds in the world, will not be able to console you—for you are of an affectionate disposition, I know, and sincerely attached to your poor lady."

"That I am!—and to betray her!— O, miss Portman, I would sooner cut off my hand than do it.—And I have been

tried more than my lady knows of, or you either (for Mr. Champfort, who is the greatest mischief-maker in the world, and is the cause, by not shutting the door, of all this dilemma—for now, ma'am, I'm convinced, by the tenderness of your speaking, that you are not the enemy to me I supposed—and I beg your pardon) but I was going to say that Mr. Champfort, who saw the *frecas* between my lord and me, about the key and the door, the night of my lady's accident, has whispered it about at lady Singleton's and every where—Mrs. Luttridge's maid, ma'am, who is my cousin, has pestered me with so many questions and offers, from Mrs. Luttridge and Mrs. Freke, of any money, if I would only tell who was in the boudoir—and I have always answered, nobody—and I defy them to get any thing out of me.—Betray my lady! I'd sooner cut my tongue out this minute—can she have such a base opinion of me, or can you, ma'am?"

"No, indeed, I am convinced that you

are incapable of betraying her, Marriott, but in all probability after you have left her—"

"If my lady would let me keep my macaw," interrupted Marriott, "I should never think of leaving her."

"The macaw she will not suffer to remain in the house—and is it reasonable that she should?—it deprives her of sleep —it kept her awake three hours this morning."

Marriott was beginning the history of Champfort and the doors again, but miss Portman stopped her by saying—

"All this is past now. — How much is due to you, Mrs. Marriot? Lady Delacour has commissioned me to pay you every thing that is due to you."

"Due to me!—Lord bless me, ma'am —am I to go?"

"Certainly—it was your own desire—it is consequently your lady's—she is perfectly sensible of your attachment to her, and of your services, but she cannot suffer herself to be treated with disrespect—here is a fifty guinea note, which she gives you as a reward for your past fidelity—

not as a bribe to secure your future secresy.—You are at liberty, she desires me to say, to tell her secret to the whole world, if you choose to do so."

"O, miss Portman, take my macaw—do what you will with it—only make my peace with my lady," cried Marriott, clasping her hands in an agony of grief—"here are the fifty guineas, ma'am, don't leave it with me—I will never be disrespectful again—take my macaw and all!—No, I will carry it myself to my lady."

Lady Delacour was surprised by the sudden entrance of Marriott, and her macaw; the chain which held the bird Marriott put into her ladyship's hand without being able to say any thing more than —"Do what you please, my lady, with it—and with me."

Pacified by this submission, lady Delacour granted Marriott's pardon, and she most sincerely rejoiced at this reconciliation.

The next day Belinda asked the dowager lady Boucher, who was going to a bird fancier's, to take her with her, in hopes

that she might be able to meet with some bird more musical than a macaw, to console Marriott for the loss of her screaming favourite.—Lady Delacour commissioned miss Portman to go to any price she pleased.—" If I were able, I would accompany you myself, my dear, for poor Marriott's sake, though I would almost as soon go to the Augean stable."

There was a bird fancier in High Holborn, who had bought several of the hundred and eighty beautiful birds, which, as the newspapers of the day advertised, had been " collected after great labour and expence, by mons. Marten, and Co. for the Republican Museum at Paris; and lately landed out of the French brig Urselle, taken on her voyage from Cayenne to Brest, by his Majesty's ship Unicorn."

When lady Boucher and Belinda arrived at this bird-fancier's, they were long in doubt to which of the feathered beauties they should give the preference. Whilst the dowager was descanting upon their various perfections, a lady and three children came in; she immediately attracted

Belinda's attention, by her likeness to Clarence Hervey's description of lady Anne Percival.—It was lady Anne, as lady Boucher, who was slightly acquainted with her, informed Belinda in a whisper.

The children were soon eagerly engaged looking at the birds.

"Miss Portman," said lady Boucher, "as lady Delacour is so far from well, and wishes to have a bird that will not make any noise in the house, suppose you were to buy for Mrs. Marriott this beautiful pair of green paroquets—or stay—a goldfinch is not very noisy, and here is one that can play a thousand pretty tricks.—Pray, sir, make it draw up water in it's little bucket for us."

"O! mamma," said one of the little boys, "this is the very thing that is mentioned in Bewick's History of Birds. Pray look at this goldfinch, Helena—now it is drawing up its little bucket—but where is Helena?—here's room for you, Helena."

Whilst the little boys were looking at the goldfinch, Belinda felt somebody touch her gently.—It was Helena Delacour,

"Can I speak a few words to you?" said Helena.

Belinda walked to the farthest end of the shop with her.

"Is my mamma better?" said she, in a timid tone. "I have some gold fish, which you know cannot make the least noise; may I send them to her?—I heard that lady call you miss Portman; I believe you are the lady who wrote such a kind postscript to me in mamma's last letter—that is the reason I speak so freely to you now. —Perhaps you would write to tell me, if mamma will see me; and lady Anne Percival would take me at any time, I am sure—but she goes to Oakly-park in a few days—I wish I might be with mamma, whilst she is ill, I would not make the least noise.—But don't ask her if you think it will be troublesome—only let me send the gold fish."

Belinda was touched by the manner in which this affectionate little girl spoke to her. She assured her that she would say all she wished to her mother, and she

begged Helena to send the gold fish whenever she pleased.

"Then," said Helena, "I will send them as soon as I go *home*—as soon as I go back to lady Anne Percival's, I mean."

Belinda, when she had finished speaking to Helena, heard the man, who was showing the birds, lament that he had not a blue macaw, which lady Anne Percival was commissioned to procure for Mrs. Margaret Delacour.

"Red macaws, my lady, I have in abundance; but unfortuately, a blue macaw I really have not, at present; nor have I been able to get one, though I have inquired amongst all the bird-fanciers in town; and I went to the auction at Haydon square, on purpose, but could not get one."

Belinda requested lady Boucher would tell her servants to bring in the cage that contained Marriott's blue macaw; and as soon as it was brought, she gave it to Helena, and begged that she would carry it to her aunt Delacour.

"Lord, my dear miss Portman," said lady Boucher, drawing her aside, "I am

afraid you will get yourself into a scrape; for lady Delacour is not upon speaking terms with this Mrs. Margaret Delacour; she cannot endure her; you know she is my lord Delacour's aunt."

Belinda persisted in sending the macaw, for she was in hopes that these terrible family quarrels might be made up, if either party would condescend to show any disposition to oblige the other.

Lady Anne Percival understood miss Portman's civility as it was meant.

"This is a bird of good omen," said she, "it augurs family peace."

"I wish you would do me the favour, lady Boucher, to introduce me to miss Portman," continued lady Anne.

"The very thing I wished!" cried Helena.

A few minutes conversation passed afterward upon different subjects, and lady Anne Percival and Belinda parted with a mutual desire to see more of each other.

END OF VOL. I.

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